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THE FRIEND ON THE ROAD

REV. J. H. JOWETT, D.D.

THE FRIEND ON THE ROAD

AND OTHER STUDIES
IN THE GOSPELS

BY

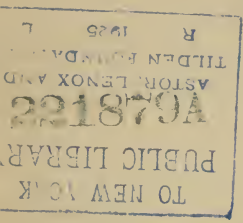
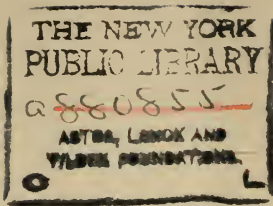
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"Thirsting for the Springs," etc.



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THE FRIEND ON
THE ROAD

THE FRIEND ON THE ROAD

I

CRITICS AND SURGEONS

"Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye? . . . First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

MATT. vii. 3, 5.

THE contrast is between bad critics and good surgeons. On the one hand there is a man with very defective eyes passing judgment on another man's sight. The partially blind is presuming to be a judge of other people's eyes. It is a case of a blind oculist. On the other hand, there is a man whose eyes are healthy and full of light, and he is gently removing a spell from his brother's eyes, and restoring him to cool and normal sight. So that the contrast presented by our Lord is

not merely a contrast between a good critic and a bad critic. The word passes beyond the circle of criticism to the realm of service. And Christ presents an ideal to us, and His ideal is that of a man whose eyes are full of discernment, whose heart is full of gentleness, and whose hands are disciplined in helpfulness, and the man is busy restoring sight to others. Our eyes are raised to contemplate a chivalrous surgeon engaged in ministries of emancipation. "If any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness." It is the work of the noblest surgeon.

Now, our Lord says that the first necessity to becoming a good surgeon is to acquire true vision. We cannot take splinters out of another man's eyes if our own eyes are filled with planks. "First cast out the beam!" But the trouble is, we do not always know that the beam is there. That is the subtle, deadening influence of perverted sight. A man's eyes can be half-full of planks, and yet he may think he has perfect sight. We cannot see ourselves.

"O wad some pow'r the giftie gie us,
To see oursels as ithers see us;

It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
And foolish notion."

A man can have a woodyard in his eyes and not know it! How much arrogance a man's eyes can carry, and yet he may not be aware of the load! How much prejudice may dwell in his eyes, and he may be entirely ignorant of the harmful tenants! How much ignorance may be piled up in his eyes, and yet he may assume they are full of enlightenment and knowledge! How much sin may be gathered in his eyes, and yet he may walk and talk as though he were pure!

And so it is a great problem how we are to see the beams that are in our own eyes. And the only way to see them is to go where there is plenty of light. Where can we find the light? We cannot find it in the ordinary light of conventional social standards. They will not reveal us to ourselves, for that sort of dim, dull light brings nothing into sight. We need a stronger light. Who has not seen shopmen bringing their goods to the doors of their shops in order to have their customers see them in the bright sunshine? The dull background, with its twilight, does not reveal the things in their true colours. Suppose

we could bring our lives into a sunshine where their real colours would be revealed. Suppose there were some "burning bliss" in which everything stands unveiled. And that is just what there is, and that is just what we can do. We can bring our lives into the light of God's holiness. We must get into this light; and to see our faults in that light, and to cry out to God for their removal, is to have God for an immediate ally in the work of their destruction.

And then do we become surgeons after the Lord's pattern. "Then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." We become experts in gentle spiritual surgery. And who would not like to be wrought upon by firm, yet gentle hands of this order? I am always attracted by Paul's description of a spiritual surgeon: "Full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish." An admonition born of those conditions would be like medicinal air from the mountains, healing air made fragrant with the heather and the wild thyme.

II

THE CHALLENGE OF THE CLOSED DOOR

“Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

MATT. vii. 7.

WE are more ready to speak of the challenge of the open door. Some opportunity shines before us with gates ajar, and the opening is a calling, in which we hear the voice of God, “Behold, I have set before thee an open door!” But, after all, it is the closed door which most severely challenges our faith and tests our ingenuity and courage. The real quality of our spirits is displayed when we have to stand knocking at the iron gate.

For instance, there is the closed door of the heart. We want to enter it with the holy love of the Lord Jesus, but it appears to be almost hermetically sealed. We knock, but we get no answer. We can hear the sounds of revelling within, and we catch glimpses of many bright distractions, but we cannot per-

suade the much-engaged friend to heed our knockings and make room for our Lord. The world is too much with him, and he has no use for Christ. It is the challenge of the closed door! There is nothing for it but to go on knocking, in the sustaining hope that some day there may be a lull in the whirling distraction, and the door may be opened to Jesus.

And there are the iron doors of caste. What a challenge they present to the servant of the Lord! Shall we just sit down before them and wait until on some happy day they open of their own accord? Or shall we exercise a sacred inventiveness, and in a thousand gentle knockings entice the imprisoned spirits to open their doors to the Lord and Saviour of all men? There is the door of prejudice. Where stern prejudice reigns every door and window is closed. How to overcome the barrier! It is a great challenge to Christian tenacity and devotion. We are called upon to bombard the closed life with light—but the light must be sunlight, it must be both light and heat, it must be both grace and truth, it must be both wisdom and love. The friendly besiegement must go on day

after day, until all opposition yields to grace, and the doors are lifted up, and the King of Glory can enter in.

Anybody can enter an open door. The real challenge comes when the door is locked and barred and sealed. He who would open a closed mind needs a big mind. He needs the grace of magnanimity and all that magnanimity breeds. In this ministry little minds are altogether without resources. We need "the mind of Christ." We need a mind purified and enlarged by His saving grace, and with such endowment we can confront other minds, and by patient knockings we can persuade them to let in the King, that they also may come into possession of their great inheritance.

III

HOW THE BEST THINGS BECOME OURS

“He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.”

MATT. x. 39.

THIS is one of the great laws of the spiritual life, and it covers all the highest things of the Spirit. If we selfishly hoard some spiritual bounty we shall certainly lose it. If we graciously give it away, eagerly letting it out of our hands, we shall have it in increasing abundance and in ever firmer possession. Spiritual treasure is like the widow's cruse of oil, it is ours as long as it is shared.

Nothing is really our own until we communicate it to others. We never see these great things until they are on the way to our neighbour. There are birds which never reveal the beauty of their plumage until they lift their wings to fly. And God's wonderful gifts to our spirit, gifts of truth and consolation, nestling in the depths of the soul,

never unfold their hidden glory until we disturb them and send them away to other lives. Just when we are giving them away they become ours in unsuspected strength and beauty. I suppose that the Apostle Paul found new insight into the sacred mysteries of the Lord's Supper every time he unveiled its privileges to other people, and led them to the wonderful feast. "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." That is the appointed order in all vital possession. We receive of the Lord; we deliver unto you. And it is only in delivering unto others that the wealth of the reception is revealed. Every time Paul brought a new guest to share the sacramental meal his own spiritual inheritance broadened from glory to glory.

How is it with a truth? We never really own a truth until we begin to share it. The very effort to impart it gives us a stronger hold upon it. Every teacher has this experience. To share some truth with a child opens it out in new splendour. It becomes clearer and more beautiful as it is going away. We gain it while we lose it. How is it with a joy? Unshared joy soon burns itself

out, but joy that is shared burns with extraordinary glow. It is oxygenated by fellowship. "That My joy may be in you." That is the law of growth in the matter of joy. My joy in you! It is then that joy blazes with wonderful light and heat.

And how is it with a conviction? My conviction more than doubles its strength when I impart it to somebody else. When I establish another man's life on some great faith or fidelity which forms one of the foundations in my life my sense of stability is immensely enriched. I am led into the experience to which the Apostle Paul refers when he says, "That I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." We are drinking of the rock which follows us, and that rock is Christ. And, finally, how is it with peace? Who knows the real deep inwardness of peace until he becomes a peacemaker? Peace is not something we can keep, and nurse, and enjoy in the locked-up seclusion of our own souls. Peace becomes weak, and sickly, and restless in such imprisonment. We only know God's peace in its vital strength as we become peacemakers, enlisting in the ministry of

reconciliation, seeking it by sacrifice, yea, making peace with our own blood. It was He who came to shed His blood in the work of reconciliation, "so making peace," who was able to speak very quietly, and confidently, and profoundly of "My peace." And it is along that road, it may be a long way off, but still on that road and following Him, that we too shall come to know the riches of the peace which is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord. And we shall find it as we lose it.

IV

SIXPENNYWORTH OF MIRACLE

"A cup of cold water only."

MATT. x. 42.

THE headline of this meditation is not mine. It belongs to George Gissing. And this is how it occurs. Gissing was going along the road one day, and he saw a poor little lad, perhaps ten years old, crying bitterly. He had lost sixpence with which he had been sent to pay a debt. "Sixpence dropped by the wayside, and a whole family made wretched. I put my hand in my pocket, and wrought sixpennyworth of miracle!"

I think Gissing's phrase is very significant. It suggests how easily some miracles can be wrought. How many troubled, crooked, miserable conditions there are which are just waiting the arrival of some simple, human ministry, and they will be immediately transformed! It is surely this kind of miracle-

working ministry which our Lord commends when He tells us of the service rendered by the gift of a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple. It is something which everybody can do, and yet it works a miracle, for it transforms the world of a weary traveller, changing his thirst into satisfaction, his faintness into strength, and his weariness into liberty and song. That miracle costs less than sixpence. A cup of cold water only, and behold! all things become new.

John Morel, Mayor of Darlington, was passing through the town and met a fellow citizen who had just been released from gaol, where he had served three years for embezzlement. "Hallo!" said the Mayor, in his own cheery tone, "I'm glad to see you! How are you?" Little else was said, for the man seemed ill at ease. Years afterwards, as John Morel told me, the man met him in another town, and immediately said, "I want to thank you for what you did for me when I came out of prison." "What did I do?" "You spoke a kind word to me, and it changed my life!" Sixpennyworth of miracle! A cup of cold water! A new world!

Ian Maclaren used to carry in his pocket a very well-worn letter, which had been sent to him by one of his poorest parishioners, and which he read again and again, and in many a changing season, and always with renewed cheer and inspiration. It was just a miracle-working letter written by an obscure parishioner who scarcely realised that she was doing anything at all. Just a cup of cold water only, but it proved to be a fountain of life.

But away and beyond all such services as these, what ministries are in our hands for working miracles in the wonder-realm of prayer! We can take sunshine into cold and sullen places. We can light the lamp of hope in the prison-house of despondency. We can loose the chains from the prisoner's limbs. We can take gleams and thoughts of home into the far country. We can carry heavenly cordials to the spiritually faint, even though they are labouring beyond the seas. Miracles in response to prayer! And yet we will not pray! We will not pray! And the great miracles tarry because we will not fall in supplication upon our knees.

V

THE PEACE OF THE LARGER LIFE

"Ye shall find rest unto your souls."
MATT. xi. 29.

CHRIST'S call is always a call to a larger life. It may not be a call to a larger field, but it is always a call to a larger life, which is independent of the size of its sphere. He calls us from small interests to universal interests. He calls us from imprisoning narrowness to the freedom of a saving magnanimity. In the realm of the Spirit all enlargement means the enrichment of our securities. In rising into the rarer air of Alpine heights we leave behind the germs and microbes which desolate the plains below. The sanatorium is always in the mountains. And in accepting the call of Christ to the larger life we are lifted above the enemies which infest the smaller life. The very bigness of our new communion makes us insensible to their threats and allurements, and we dis-

cover that many of the struggles and irritations of our previous life are ended. The drop of vinegar which adds a tang of bitterness to a cup of water is entirely lost when it is dropped in a lake. We escape a horde of small miseries by just becoming bigger men.

I very much like the illumining word that was written of Lady Ripon when she passed away a year ago. It was written by one of her intimate friends: "The war seemed to bring peace to her spirit, as to so many; a great call that stilled the troubling of the world." When the war came her life was captured in a marvellously large absorption, and all meaner distractions lost their power. All the faculties of her spirit were engaged in a larger orbit, and she had no energy of attention to spare for the things which had hitherto drunk her blood.

And this is how God purposes to save us continually. We escape from the wretched discontent which fills our spirits when we are under the juniper tree by going forth to "stand upon the mount before the Lord." We are delivered from the petty tyranny of our complainings when we go out to give

liberty to the captives and to open the prison to them that are bound. We find God's peace when we respond to His great call, and accept His commission, and shed our blood in the service of His children. "Ye shall find rest unto your souls."

And therefore it is very true that there are many fretful and much troubled people whose burden would be immediately lightened if they would take an additional load by sharing the burdens of others. That is the miracle which has been accomplished in countless numbers during the past four years. The war has opened many prison doors. It has broken down the walls of a coddling selfishness in many a life, and it has led the astonished spirit into treasures of undreamed-of freedom. It is not that the old irritabilities have been vanquished. They have simply been left behind. They have dropped away like old leaves which fall from the trees as the driving force of a new sap rises in their hearts in the early days of the spring. "Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." They have taken their places on God's great highway, and they have begun to live.

VI

EDUCATION BY CONTAGION

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven."
MATT. xiii. 33.

THAT is a very vital education, perhaps the most vital of all, which is effected by contagion. It is given by touch rather than by teaching. The most profound education is not that which has been most deliberately given. There are professors in colleges and universities whose words no more affect the deep springs of the soul than the dripping of the broken spout outside their lecture-room. And even when they are not so entirely inefficient they may only inculcate certain doctrines while they do not educate the soul. It is the vital touch which tells upon character, and most frequently this touch is not conveyed through the medium of the spoken word. The touch may be given in a very temporary contact. A passing incident

may convey the vital force. Or the experience may be more prolonged. We may brush against somebody for days and weeks together, and although never a moral precept or a spiritual counsel pass between us, we come under the power of an extraordinary contagion, and our character appropriates the virtue or the virus of our fellowship. It is education by contagion.

When we look back upon our early life from the high vantage-ground of later years, and we trace its turnings, and mark the great diversions which meant momentous destinies, we can see how often the change was made, not by a professional instructor, but by some influence which at that time was anonymous and untraced. I can look back upon my own early days, and I can see silent forces, which were then invisible, pouring their influences like tributaries into the main stream of my life. And I could now write some names in this paragraph, the bearers of which would be amazed to see them in print. There was T—— F——, the ingenious playmate who gave me a hobby which has served me in all succeeding years. There was no deliberate leading; it was just educa-

tion by contagion. There was P—— G——. His love for politics made me a politician, and a very burning one, too! And then there was O—— D——, who supplied our little circle with a standard of conduct. He never uttered an oracular word. He was a very shy and silent member of the boyish fellowship, but his very presence acted like a royal measure in the shaping and expression of our moral judgments and decisions. All these, and many others, knew nothing about what they were doing. I did not know it. But their fine contagion had a ceaseless ministry. The contact issued in forceful emanations and the vital currency was always flowing.

And so it is in higher interests still. Our contagions are usually far more educative and influential than our speech. Everybody is inclined to admit this on the bad side, but everybody is not so ready to admit it on the good side. They acknowledge that vice is contagious, but not virtue. They acknowledge that disease is contagious, but not health. It is more than likely that one is just as influential as the other. A truly strong and nobly consecrated life moves in

human fellowship with tremendous power of contagion. The weight of human impressiveness is measured by the reality of its divine communion. It is touching and influencing everybody with whom it deals, and the touch is always holy and wholesome. "He that believeth in Me, out of him shall flow rivers of water," and, "Everything shall live whither the river cometh."

VII

THE TARES AMONG THE WHEAT

“Didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? Whence then hath it tares?”

MATT. xiii. 27.

YES, where do the tares come from? Who are the carriers, and who are the sowers of the unwelcome seed? I spend no end of time weeding my garden. I choose favourable seasons when the soil is soft and loose, and I pull up the weeds, “root and all, and all in all.” I cleanse the soil, I burn it. I give it pure nourishment. I sow the best seed. But the weeds appear. “Where do they come from?” I ask the gardener. “Well,” he says, “for one thing there is a neglected patch less than a mile away, and we are not far from the open country.” And what I experience in my garden every farmer experiences in his fields. The ill seed is borne by every wind, and every bird is a minister in its distribution.

Who has not seen the tares? They even enter fortunate fields which have the most favoured exposure. There are tares in the Church of Christ. The good Lord sows good seed, for he has no other, and yet the tares appear. We can see them growing in the Church of the earliest days. Cast your eyes over the Church in Corinth; what an awful sight for the farmer! Could anybody have imagined that such noxious, poisonous things could so speedily have invaded the field and taken possession? We can see the tares growing in the Church of the Middle Ages. We can see rank growths appearing in the Church of the Puritans. And we should be stone-blind if we did not see them in the Church of our own day. The tares are fearfully mixed up with the wheat, and wheat is often strangled and smothered in the wild confusion. "Didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? Whence then hath it tares?"

And who has not seen the tares appear in the fair field of beneficence and philanthropy? Some man makes a clean bequest for clean and honourable issues. Perhaps it is a considerate provision for the poor.

And the wheat is very sweet and lovely. But the weeds appear. Sectarian prejudices get into the hospitality and all sorts of bitter bigotries are mixed with its ministries. The good man sowed good seed, whence then hath it tares? Or it may be that some Andrew Carnegie thinks of the field of education, and determines to enrich it with his beneficence. He will open wide doors of opportunity for every student. He will make it easier for everyone to make his way. Bursaries and scholarships shall abound. The University shall be practically free. What a field of fine wheat! But tares appear—lethargy, enervation, indolence, ease. Yes, indeed, fat tares flourish in the field of beneficence.

And who has not seen the tares in other fields of the soul's inheritance? Perhaps some finer freedom has been sown by noble hands, some splendid franchise, some quick and quickening emancipation. It was fine, clean wheat, and yet the blade has scarcely appeared before the tares appeared also. Every extension of noble liberty has been accompanied by some form of licence—darnels which look very much like honest wheat. Freedom of speech is attended by

irresponsibility, by blasphemy, by gossip and scandal. Good seed was sown in the field; whence then hath it tares?

And who has not seen the tares in the fields of literature and art? Clean, sweet, strong seed is sown in the fields, but the tares are flung into the soil and grow up with the wheat. There are things which are sane and wholesome, and there are things which are neurotic. Some books are pure and healthy as the angels which "excel in strength," and there are books with sensual setting and inclination. There are books which are vital and vitalising, and there are books which are decadent and deadly. It is a rare field, and good seed was sown in it, whence then hath it tares?

And what about the fields of recreation? What fine healthy, attractive things can be seen in the realm of sport! What clean vigour, what masculine emulation! But the tares appear with the wheat. Gambling is in every field, and in many a field there is jealousy, and foul play, and strife and ill-contention. Aye, tares get among the wheat. What then? Let us scatter God's seed with prodigal hands. Let us sow it everywhere.

Let us be keen and alert in our sowing. Let us be the first in every field. Let us sow it in private and in public. As far as lies in us, let us give the devil no advantage. Let us watch and pray, and let us be busy in our fields with an unfailing determination that in the day of the harvest home the Lord shall have a heavy reaping for His garner.

VIII

THINGS NEW AND OLD

“Like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.”

MATT. xiii. 52.

IT is the combination of the new and old which makes the wise and healthy steward in the things of the Kingdom of God. If we bring only old things out of the treasury we lose the challenge of opportunity and the inspiration of progress. The new occasion, which teaches new duties, is purposed to elicit new resource, and to make it clear that our secret wealth is more than equal to the severest and most exacting demand. If we bring only new things out of the treasury life is apt to lose its gravity; it forfeits the gathered harvest of experience. It surrenders the fine wisdom of the historic conscience. It is apt to venture forth upon an emotion without the steadying control of matured conviction. It is in the mingling of the two

that life finds its sanity and its strength. We are to meet the novel experience of a new day with the wedded fellowship of new discernment and ripe experience.

Let us look around us. We are confronted by a new world. The year 1914 seems a century away. And, indeed, we have lived through generations of experience in this little span of six years. There are novel presences on every side, born and matured in a night. Things which were once very weak have found invincible armour, and they are marching along the roads in domineering strength. Movements, which were small as mustard seeds, have become great trees. Causes, which had scarcely found a cry six years ago, have now a sovereign voice. Old relationships are as dead as Queen Anne. We are jostling one another in startling independence. Everybody is elbowing somebody else. We hear the word "rights" shouted along every road, and mingling with "rights" is the cry of "freedom." Every sleeping thing is now awake, and it is stretching forth both hands to grasp its own inheritance. We live in a new world.

And there are some men who, in view of all these novel conditions, are bringing only new things out of their treasury. All the old things have to be scrapped—the gathered wealth of the constitution, the well-proved axioms of political government, the sanctity of wedded life, the ministries of the Church, the sacred rites and mysteries of religion. They must all go! They have had their day, and they must cease to be! Let us have a clean sheet! Such is the cry of a multitude.

On the other hand, there are men who bring only old things out of their treasury. They are blind to the new conditions, or, if they see clearly, they decide that the new is not the true. They measure all things with straight yard-sticks, which cannot follow the new windings and convolutions of modern necessity and aspiration. They are prejudiced against everything that is new. They do not like to be troubled by novelties. They consult their sense of comfort rather than their sense of rectitude. Their emotional strength is not large enough, or sensitive enough, to feel the healthy stretchings and the growing pains of a new age. They have only old things for new worlds. They bring

out a Sedan chair when men are learning to fly.

Surely the wise way is the Master's way, and that is to bring out of the treasury things new and old. We need new sympathies, and by the grace of God we must grow them. Sympathies which have travelled only one mile must now travel two, and if need be twenty-two. Sympathies which have been shut within sheltered little paddocks must now go beyond the old walls and venture down very unfamiliar roads. And they must go along these new roads, not with dark flags of mistrust and depression, but under bright banners of gaiety and hope. Yes, we need new sympathies for new presences, and new causes, and new interests. The world needs these new sympathies—new tendrils of good will, and magnanimity, and perceptive understanding, feeling out for strange new things, and winding around them in helpful and fraternal support. The believers in Jesus Christ must bring out of their treasury things new.

Yes, and things old, too. We must not drop old moralities in the novel demands of a new world. The universal upheaval has

not crumbled Sinai to a plain. The Ten Commandments are not obsolete. Calvary is not a fading name. Olivet is not a relic of an abandoned legend. Christ is not in His grave. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The things of His kingdom are as old as His love, and they are as new as our need. If we drop the old things all the new things will become insecure. Nay, they will prove to be vanity, and less than vanity. "Apart from Me ye can do nothing."

IX

THE BUOYANCY OF FAITH

“He walked upon the waters to come to Jesus.”

MATT. xiv. 29.

FAITH is always the secret of buoyancy. We can plant our footsteps in the sea when our faith is resting in the Lord. The waves can never overwhelm us. We ride upon the storm. When Mrs. Booth, the mother of the Salvation Army, was dying, she witnessed in great triumph, “The waters are rising, but I am not sinking!” When old Mr. Honest reached the river he found that, in Christ Jesus, its destructiveness was broken, and he went through the waters singing, “Grace reigns!” And so it is in all the rivers and floods through which the believer has to pass; he cannot be holden of them, he rises above them, he is their superior in the Lord.

And thus the believer in Christ Jesus is

to be distinguished by his buoyancy. This is to be his song as he confronts the most tremendous seas, "Therefore will we not fear though the waters roar and be troubled!" His fame is to be that of the man whom nothing can sink. He is to be always on the top of circumstances, their master and not their slave. Like the Apostle Paul, he is to be "always confident," knowing whom he has believed. When the spirits of others are sinking he is to be the one to hearten them, to lift them up by his own unquenchable cheer. He is to sing songs in the night.

And what times are these for the display of spiritual buoyancy! What great reasons for walking the troubled seas! What opportunities for witnessing to the power of the resurrection in lifting the soul above the floods of death and hell! For the Lord Himself is on the deep. He walks the waters which He calls us to tread. He does not send us on a daring but lonely errand; He invites us into His fellowship. The walk on the deep is a journey with the Lord. And, therefore, by faith we share His conquests. "The works that I do shall ye do also." We

can walk the stormy sea! And when those who do not know the Lord look upon our power to rise above the troubled circumstance, their souls will begin to move toward the secret of our life, and by faith they also shall find the same uplifting strength in the fellowship of Christ.

X

SOUND THE GREAT RECALL

“Do ye not remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets ye took up?”

MATT. xvi. 9.

IN the midst of to-day's necessity I am to recall the providence of yesterday. I am to sing of “His love in times past.” I am to visit the Ebenezers I have built as memorials of my deliverance, and I am to look about for the altars of testimony which have been built by others. For other pilgrims have been along this road. This is not the first time that men have faced grim problems, and seen the teeth of gaunt hunger at their gates. And the recorded witness tells me that God was about the road as well as the hunger. The mighty Harvester was on the unsown waste, and the multitude was fed! And now in our day the necessity is huge, and our means are scanty. Sound the great recall! “Do ye not remember?”

“Who through this weary pilgrimage hast all our fathers led?”

Do I not remember the inspired triumphs of the Lord's knights who fought the battle of the past? The roads along which we march are full of sacred reminiscence. Everywhere our common road is holy ground. “On this ground Christian stood, and up there came Apollyon against him. Behold, also, how here and there are yet to be seen upon the place some of the shivers of Apollyon's broken darts. . . . Verily, Christian did here play the man!” Thus is the road vocal with the witness of the King's knights. Let us listen to their witness, for “the Lord of hosts is with us, and the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

By God's grace, and by our own steady faith, and by the exploits which are born of grace and faith, let us make our way an illustrious yesterday for the children of tomorrow. Let our sons and daughters find “the shivers of Apollyon's broken darts,” and let them visit the hallowed spots “where with our blows we did split the very stones in pieces.” We owe to our posterity a noble witness to our God. When our children

shall sound the great recall, let it be that the gathered volume of testimony shall contain the witness of God's dealings with us, and may their conflicts be all the more assured because we have such wonderful triumphs to-day. "I heard a voice behind me saying!" Let us be grateful for that voice, which is "like the sound of many waters," and which is the mighty witness of a multitude that no man can number. "Day unto day uttereth speech"; and happy are we if we catch their heartening testimony.

XI

THE BRIGHT CLOUD

"Behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them."

MATT. xvii. 5.

THE other day I watched a cloud form very suddenly and cover the summit of a great mountain, and hide its exalted glory. I could see the track, which had been made by the feet of many generations, winding up the mountain, and I could see where it was lost in the lowering cloud. The cloud itself was bright and radiant. It concealed, and yet it was luminous. It had its deep secrets, and yet it was lucent. It was a home of light, and yet it acted as a veil. The summit of the mountain was hid, but the minister of concealment was also a minister of grace and glory.

And there are bright clouds which often overshadowed the lives of the devoted friends of the Lord Jesus Christ. Secrets

are hid from our gaze. We cannot trace even the outlines of our Father's will. Meanings are shrouded in mystery, but in the very mystery there is a certain radiance. The Presence that is hid is shining. The secrets are love secrets. The veil is there, but within the veil is the home of God.

The atonement itself is a bright cloud. The ordinary roads are lost in the vast mystery, and the mountain peaks are hid, but the cloud is not black and cold and chilling; it is warm and radiant with eternal love. The Lord is within the cloud, in the unfathomable wonders of perpetual sacrifice. Our understandings are not yet finally enlightened, but the heart is kindled and sustained. We can rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. When the veil is lifted we shall see "Jesus only."

And in Christ Jesus even death itself is a bright cloud. It is a great mystery, but it is lit up from within. The fitting symbol of a Christian's death is not midnight but dawn; not blackness but greyness, for greyness is just blackness made luminous with an indwelling whiteness. Within the mystery of death the Sun of Righteousness is

arisen and there is healing in His radiant wings. The veil has not yet been lifted; but death is like a house in the night-time, whose shades are drawn, and whose door is closed, but whose windows are bright with the comforting cheer of fire and light within. Our Lord is in the house and the mystery is radiant.

And so it is with many other mysteries which confront us in life's way. In Christ Jesus there are bright clouds. To-morrow is one of them. Yes, and when we look back, yesterday is another of them. We need not fear to enter the cloud. The transfigured Saviour is within. It is the dwelling-place of the Lord.

XII

MERCY AND OBLIGATION

“I forgave thee all that debt; oughtest thou not therefore to have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, as I had compassion on thee?”

MATT. xviii. 32-3.

HERE is a man who has received a great mercy, and while he is rejoicing in his own freedom he goes forth to oppress his fellow-man. He is false to his own experience. He is a traitor to his own deliverer. He utterly fails to read the significance of his own life. It was the hope and purpose of his master that, having been released from his own burden, he would hasten away to release his brother. The spacious joy of freedom ought to have made him an apostle of liberty. The sunny cheeriness of his own new day should make him a mountain-herald of glad tidings to all who may be still in the gloom. He had become a child of privilege, and he ought to be inspired with a sacred

sense of obligation. That is the broad and certain teaching of the Lord—we are to translate our mercies into obligations. We are to look into our favours and search for suggestions of our duties. We are to carefully count our blessings and then regard them all as the interpreters of our divine commissions. We are to do to others as the gracious Lord has done to us. There is an “ought” in every mercy. There is a duty in every bounty.

Well, that opens out one clear road of moral obligation. If we are to find our duties among our mercies, it is necessary that we tread the somewhat forgotten road of divine providence. We must rummage among our negligences. We must make an inventory of our favours. We must notice where a lamp was lit for us at a dark turning of the way. We must call to mind the sweet waters of the spring which we found by the foot of the hill. We must re-cross the once-while wilderness which so startlingly began to blossom like the rose. We must remember the lilies of peace that were given to us in the valley of humiliation. We must go back and listen to the angel of consolation who

brought us bread and wine when we were fainting by a newly made grave. We must return to that momentous hour when our heaviest burden rolled away at the foot of the Cross and we saw it no more. We must call our memory to awake, and we must command it to display the treasures which we have received at the hands of the Lord. "The Lord's dealings with George Müller!" Such was the way in which that great lover of men used to record the love-gifts of his God. And we, too, must rehearse His dealings with ourselves, and when we have surveyed all the shining tokens of His grace, we must re-read them in terms of obligation, and we must go forth in the same spirit of blessing to help and cheer our fellow-men. "I gave . . . thou oughtest!"

This has always been one of the lofty distinctions of the saints. They have had consecrated memories, and they have come into God's presence in the multitude of His mercies. But that is not all. Memory has been the inspiration of service. They have come before the Lord laden with the experience of His bounty, and this sense of grace has inspired the sacred desire for a corre-

sponding ministry. "I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercies. . . . What shall I render unto the Lord for all His mercies toward me?" These are two complementary acts in the healthy action of praise—the sense of God's mercy and a willingness to render it again in the service of His Holy Will.

XIII

THE SIMPLIFICATION OF LIFE

"Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

MATT. xix. 14.

SIMPLICITY is one of the great characteristics of the supreme life as taught and revealed by Jesus Christ our Lord. He was always seeking to lead people back from the impoverished life in which the currents are sluggish, and the arteries are hardened, and all the movements are stiff and formal. He would constrain us back into the realm of vital freedom where life is liquid and musical, and where intercourse is natural and unconventional. "Except ye turn, and become as little children!" That was a tone of warning, as that indeed is the line of promise. If our life is to be wholesome and progressive we must repeatedly turn from the age of stone, which comes with the years, to the plastic and unexhausted susceptibility of a little child.

Lord Morley has somewhere said that simplification is the keynote of the Reformation. It pierced behind the artificial and conventional to the natural man and natural life. But this is surely true of every healthy revolution: its movement is from the complicated to the single, from the technical to the vital, from the merely traditional to the original springs. Its tendency is from palsied age to the little child.

Crises continually arise which compel us to get rid of exhausting encumbrances. We have become overburdened with the multiplication of harness. It is not always the ordinary load of life which crushes us; it is the increasingly heavy and complicated means which we have devised to draw it. Our yoke is more galling than our burden; the harness is more harassing than the load. The complications increase with the years. Society becomes a steel network of hard artificial bonds, instead of remaining a sweet, elastic and lovely fellowship. Prayer becomes fossilised. Theology grows arid and technical. Public worship becomes mere church-going, as tedious as the making of conventional social calls. "She has God on

her visiting list!" Think of the formality and artificiality which hide behind that vivid phrase! Everything grows hard and unelastic in the conventional drip, drip of a petrifying formality.

And so there is imperative need of crises and revolutions which will compel us to seek a simplification of life and thought and feeling, and which will make us turn again and become as a little child. And may not this be one of the deep secrets of the time through which we are passing, and may not this divine simplification be one of its glorious issues? Things were becoming fearfully stiff and conventional. Now we are going to become more natural, which will mean more fraternal, more genially accessible to one another, more reverently hospitable to our Lord. We are going to learn of Him, and in meekness and lowliness we shall find that our yoke is easy and our burden is light.

XIV

LIFE'S PERILOUS HEATS

"He took her by the hand. And immediately the fever left her."

MARK i. 31.

It is not illegitimate to allow our minds to pass from the fevers of the body to the fevers of the soul. Indeed, that is one of the authorised ways when we seek to interpret the miracles of the Lord. The Saviour's miracles are the outer and visible types of inner and greater wonders. They are done in the body in order that we may infer the deeper emancipations of the spirit. Is not this the teaching of the Lord? "That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." (Then saith He to the sick of the palsy), "I say unto thee, Rise, take up thy bed and walk." That is to say, "I will liberate a paralysed body that ye may know I am able to liberate a paralysed soul." And the latter deliverance is the greater of the

two. Therefore, do I say that it is legitimate for our thoughts to pass from the fevers which consume the body to the deadlier fevers which consume the soul. Let us consider one or two examples.

There is the fever of impatience. Our spirits can become very heated in the exacting experience of having to wait for something which is long in appearing. We may lose the coolness of a calm self-control. It is the evidence of great strength of character when we can quietly wait the coming of a tediously slow event. Waiting is in some ways a higher attainment than walking, as walking may be a higher attainment than running. Waiting may be the revelation of very impressive strength. We see it in the wonderful patience of the Master as He says, "Mine hour is not yet come." He refused to be rushed. His temper was not flurried. He was cool, and serene, and assured. He waited for the appointed time. He would not move until the hour had struck.

But the majority of us get hot with impatience when the waiting is long drawn out. We want to be "doing something." And the feverish spirit affects all our powers un-

healthily. Our faculties become like plants in an overheated greenhouse, and they wilt and droop. And what is the remedy? I find it in an Old Testament promise: "He that believeth shall not make haste"—he shall not get into a fuss. Belief in God holds the soul in a quieting and strengthening communion with God. We feel the cooling hand of the Master, and the perilous heats die out of our souls.

And there is the fever of fretfulness. The very word "fret" is significant of destruction. It is closely akin to the word "friction," and it carries the same suggestion of something which is consuming a precious thing. The rubbing of two things together produces heat. The dry axle of a railway carriage, as it revolves, creates a perilous heat. The dry ball-bearings of a bicycle create friction and thereby engender heat. And all this comes from a lack of soothing, smoothing oil. And so it is in the soul. Fretfulness is the dry grinding of one thing against another. The mind is grinding against circumstance. It may be that the circumstance is a thing of yesterday, and we fret about it. Or it may be a thing of to-day,

or it may be a thing of to-morrow. And we rub against it in fretfulness and worry, and we are rubbing all the time. And we get hot and feverish, and in the deadly fire many precious things are consumed. We need the cooling touch of the Lord. The axle does not need to cease its motion in order to keep cool; it only needs oil. And when our souls have the unction of the Holy One the movements of our life are eager, but they are not feverish. We can live and labour without any perilous heat. We trust, and we are not afraid.

XV

FEVERISHNESS

"He took her by the hand . . . and the fever left her."

MARK i. 31.

IT is probable that every physical malady has its spiritual analogy. The ravages of some disease in the body are types of deadly invasion among the vital processes of the soul. Palsy, leprosy, and the withered limb are the shadowed lineaments of a more appalling paralysis, and a more gruesome leprosy, and a more awful decay among the living treasures of the spirit. And our Lord healed the lesser maladies that He might make it manifest He could heal the greater. "That ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins: then saith He to the sick of the palsy, Rise!" That is to say, He liberated a palsied body as a witness that He could give liberty to a paralysed soul. He drove the feverishness

out of the flesh in order to assure us that He could restore the feverish and distracted spirit.

We are living through days when there is urgent need of spiritual coolness. We are apt to fret ourselves into a perilous temperature. There is danger of a mental fever which engenders more heat than light. We are liable to spiritual excitement and hysteria. "The fever of the world hangs upon the beatings of the heart." What ministers are provided to dispel feverishness and to restore the soul to cool and healthy activity? I would not forget the elect men and women, the dedicated spirits who are endowed with rare power and influence for breathing through the impulses of heated desire mysterious coolness and balm. And particularly I cannot forget the ministry of Wordsworth, who is proving himself in these days both guide and guardian to many troubled spirits. He is offering to them what John Stuart Mill found in him, "a medicine for my state of mind," or the "healing power" of which Matthew Arnold sings, or that great bequest which William Watson proclaims, "Thou hadst for weary feet the gift of rest."

All such ministers can be received with gratitude as minor means of grace but they should lead us beyond all these lesser and secondary influences to the supreme and original spring. There is a feverishness, fierce and consuming, which can only be dealt with by Jesus Christ. Indeed, there is no form of feverishness, not even common fretfulness, which can be radically extirpated except in the all-sufficient grace of our Lord. He alone can expel the tormenting and inflaming spirit. He alone can impart the deep serenity which is born of a steadfast and eternal hope. He alone can restore the healthy balance to our disturbed powers, and pervade the entire life with the wonderful harmony of strong and wholesome self-control. When He touches us the fever flees away. "He that believeth shall not make haste"—that is to say, he shall not get excited, and lose his head or his heart, for "he shall be kept in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

XVI

THE TRULY SENSATIONAL LIFE

"They were all amazed and glorified God, saying,
We never saw it on this fashion."

MARK ii. 12.

WHAT made them talk in this way? What had happened? A paralysed man had found his freedom. He was carrying his bed, the bed on which he had been carried to the Lord. He who was burdensome has become the burden-bearer. There he was, erect, strong and contagiously glad, striding down the street! How can you get over that? Who could miss the force of that happening? It stares upon the crowd like a placard in the street. A miracle of that kind is more than a word, it is a word made flesh. Anybody can see it. It is an incarnate wonder. It is walking about, and every step is a word in the convincing witness. And the crowds were amazed, as well they might be, and they glorified God. If the wonder had ended in

wonder it might have ended with the day. It would have been as transient as a photographic film which has been brought into the light of the sun. The film which has received the impression requires fixing, and then it becomes secure. And how is a transient wonder to be fixed except in praise? Praise is the soul's fixing solution, and it gives permanency to ephemeral impressions. These people were amazed, and they glorified God, and thousands of them retained their holy wonder through their life.

Well, now, in some way or other we have to arrest the world's attention to-day. How can we stir the outside world to wonder and praise? We must first of all arouse their attention. Men's minds must be compelled to turn their eyes, and look, and think. And how is it to be done? They must be made to see something very extraordinary in the commonplace street. The great constraint must be a thing of life. Out of the Church of Christ must go forth vigorous, healthy men and women, who went in paralysed. There must be the consummate sensation of a transformed and transfigured life. Things must be done in the Church which are

done nowhere else. The world must be compelled to offer the witness, "we never saw it on this fashion." Broken things, which nobody could mend, must be seen to be whole again. What can Christ do with broken things? The streets must carry the witness. Lives which were broken and defiled by passion must walk along the streets sweet and whole again. Broken wills must be restored, and men must be seen who were like bending reeds, who are now like iron pillars. Aye, and broken hearts must witness to the wonderful healing power of the Saviour's love and grace. The world must be compelled to ask, "How did it happen? The man has been broken for years, and look at him now!" That is the kind of sensation which startles and wins, the sensational spectacle of men and women who were once paralysed marching along the streets as to the beat of drums.

We must pray for the multiplication of these living witnesses. Let every Church pray that there may be in its midst a well-known Lazarus, whom Christ has raised from the dead, and it may be that the crowd will go to "see Lazarus also whom He raised

from the dead." Let the Church of the living God, through the power of His mighty grace, multiply its miracles of healing. Let us send out epistles which can be read by anybody and everybody, epistles which way-faring men, though fools, will be able to understand. These are the real sensations, and they are the only sensations we need to seek.

XVII

THE DOMINANT PASSION

“And as Jesus passed by, He saw Levi . . . and said unto him, Follow Me.”

MARK ii. 14.

“And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said, Zaccheus, come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house.”

LUKE xix. 5.

I THINK these two incidents reveal the influence of a dominant passion. What was the primary constraint in the life of Jesus? What was it that controlled His eyes? What was He looking for as He went along the road? He was looking for disciples who should incarnate His gospel and be citizens of His spiritual kingdom. His eyes were eager scouts for followers and evangelists. His passion determined His vision. No one but Jesus saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus. No one but Jesus saw Zaccheus. Nobody wanted to see them. Nobody cared about

them. They were seen, and yet not seen; they were mere ciphers, empty of all significance. But Jesus cared, and He cared with burning eagerness, and He made His quest as with searchlights which sought out every nook and corner, prying even among obscurities for treasures for His kingdom. Yes, His eyes were the servants of His passion, always and everywhere. "As Jesus passed by, He saw Levi, and said, Follow Me."

It is very interesting and instructive to watch the influence of the dominant passion among meaner interests than these. I went into a room the other day which I have visited scores of times, but this time in the company of a friend who had never been before. He cast his eyes around the room, and he immediately made for a small table, and began to draw his hand over its surface as gently as though he were touching the breast of a dove. "Oh, how lovely!" he said, as he brought a small hand-glass out of his pocket to examine the grain. "What a lovely piece!" There was part of a magnificent library in the room, but he never saw it! He had a particular passion, and the passion controlled his sight.

But let us return to the higher plane. I was once walking with Hugh Price Hughes along Piccadilly on the way to Holborn. He had hold of my arm, and I both heard and felt the man's intensity. I do not remember what we were talking about, but when we reached Leicester Square, and were passing the Empire Music Hall, he suddenly stopped, and, pointing to the Empire, he said, "I must have that place for Christ. What a glorious centre for the Gospel!" It was the influence of the dominant passion. His eyes were scouring London for strategical points for the warfare of the Lord. He lived to win souls, and his life was consecrated to one campaign. He looked at everything with the eyes of a soldier of Christ, and as he passed along he was ceaselessly watching for opportunity of battle. Colonel Repington has recently told us that he once asked Kitchener how it occurred to him to bring the white divisions from India to France in the early days of the war, and he quietly answered, "It came to me in the night!" Kitchener was thinking armies, thinking, thinking all the time. He awoke in the night, and

thought warfare. And so it was with Hugh Price Hughes. He thought Christ and Christ only. "Thou, O Christ, art all I want."

XVIII

DOING THE IMPOSSIBLE

“Stretch forth thy hand.”

MARK iii. 5.

THAT was the one thing he couldn't do! And he was asked to do it! Christ named his great incapacity and demanded the impossible. For years and years the shrunken, shrivelled thing had hung helplessly at his side, a poor mockery of a hand. “Stretch forth thy hand!” Impossible! But he did it! “And his hand was made whole like unto the other.”

I very much like an epitaph which is found upon a woman's grave in New England —“She hath done what she couldn't!” Strange achievements hide behind that significant line. She did the impossible. Nobody would have dared to prescribe such things for her. Nobody ever thought she could do them. But she did them. “In watchings oft!” Long night watchings in

nursing the sick! Night after night, day after day! "You'll never be able to do it!" But she did! Or she made prolonged vigils in quest of God's lost children, on desolate wastes and on cold nights. "You'll break down!" But she didn't. "She hath done what she couldn't!"

And that is to be the Christian's distinction. "What do ye more than others?" We are not to walk in the average ranks; we are to march in the van. We are to triumphantly beat the average. Anybody can do the possible. We are called to do the impossible, the things we cannot do. We are to make a living, and at the same time to ennoble a life. We are to get on and get up. We are to be ambitious and aspirant. We are to be creatures with wings, and yet to be the busiest folks on the hardest roads.

And harder things than these we have to do. We are to go to lives where hearts are like flint, and we are to melt them with the ministry of light. Impossible! Yes, we are to win great battles, and we are to have no other equipment than "the armour of light." We are to overturn mighty strongholds with the forces of the spirit. Impossible!

“Things that are not are to bring to nought things that are.” Such is to be the Christian’s distinction. We are to march beyond the stern borders of the possible and set our feet in impossible lands.

Our Lord commands it. What is the secret of the achievement? This is the secret. His commandments are always the pledge of the needful endowments. The blind man obeys his Master, and goes forth to find his sight in the pool of Siloam. How impossible! Yes, but he went, and Christ’s holy power went with him, and he came back seeing. The cure was not in Siloam, but in the journey; not in the mineral spring, but in the obedience. “As he went he received his sight.” At Christ’s bidding faith sets out on the most astounding errands, “and laughs at impossibilities, and cries, ‘It shall be done!’ ”

XIX

THE LIFE I SHOULD LIVE

“And Simon He surnamed Peter.”

MARK iii. 16.

HIS first name meant an uncertain sort of hearer, his second name meant a rock. And the Lord deliberately displaced the weaker name and supplanted it by a stronger one. “Simon” was a man of fickle impulse, undependable, slipping out of one’s grasp like a handful of sand. “Peter” was rock, granite, invincible as the everlasting hills. I wonder how the sand felt the first time it was called rock! Oh, how should I feel if the Lord were now to appear and address me by that tremendous name? The new name did not describe the man as he was. It described the man he might be, and the man he was to be. It was not the name of a man who had arrived, but the name of a man who was on the journey.

Here, then, is a glimpse into one of our

Lord's methods in training those whom He had ordained. He fixed His thought on the vast possibilities which stretched before them. He thought of people in terms of what they would be. Whilst they were still learning the alphabet He saw them familiar with the highest literature. When they were just learning to walk He saw them as finished athletes. He was Alpha and Omega, and He saw the end from the beginning. He saw the mighty oak in the fragile sapling, and in its earliest stages He rejoiced in the king of the forest, the lord and sovereign of storm and windy circumstance.

And so we find our Master continually addressing people in the brilliant titles of their new names, the names which indicate their brilliant possibilities and their coming achievements. "Ye are the light of the world." "Ye are the salt of the earth." "He also is a son of Abraham." When the Lord gave a man a new name it was a call from the heights. And how inspiring it would be! It would rouse like the sound of a bugle. Surely Simon would pull himself together when Christ called him Peter. Surely he stretched himself toward his sug-

gested stature. And so with Zaccheus when the Lord called him "a son of Abraham." The little man went home that night walking as if he were six feet three.

And this is how our great Saviour thinks of thee and me. He thinks of us now as though we were perfected. And His grace will bring us into the very perfection which we seem to wear in His holy love. We are called "children of God," "children of light," "heirs of God," "joint-heirs with Christ," "Saints of the household of faith." How greatly He thinks of us!

XX

THE BLESSING AND DISCIPLINE OF RETIREMENT

“Come ye yourselves apart and rest for a while.”

MARK vi. 31.

AND thus the Saviour Himself took time to rest. He had only three years of public ministry, and yet He made time for rest. He regarded the rest as a vital element in His service. He sought “the calm of hills above” in order that He might be more fitted for the comings and goings in the busy vale below. He went aside into the green pastures so as to be braced for the next stage along the busy road. The retirement was a cordial and a restorative for body, mind, and soul. And if the Saviour of the world found time for the correctives of rest, surely His disciples must follow Him into the same refreshing fields.

John Ruskin has told us that whenever he visited some great gallery of art, he found, after a time, that the continual pro-

cession of changing colours irritated and confused his eyes, and he lost the accuracy and sanity of his artistic discernments. So he carried in his pocket a tablet of neutral hue, the restful colour of the meadows, and he would turn his bewildered vision upon it until the quietness of his perception was restored. In a certain very real way he went apart, and in the retirement he found a new competency for his work. And surely in our own day, when the rush of life is so fierce, when everything is so intense, when our besetting interests are so manifold, and often so glaring and bewildering, it is imperative that we get apart and correct our moral and spiritual vision. The strain impairs our powers and they need the rest of the neutral tints. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He restoreth my soul."

"Drop Thy still dews of quietness
Till all our strivings cease.
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace."

XXI

ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

"All things are possible to him that believeth."

MARK ix. 23.

OUR possibilities are as big as our tasks. Nay, they are bigger than our tasks, for it is purposed that when the task is finished we shall have strength to spare. It is the will of our God that there should be a glorious "plus" in all our warfare, so that when the victory is won we are "more than conquerors." The size of a task is therefore never a justification for retreat. "If, as soldiers of the cross, we stick at anything, we are disgraced for ever!" Hesitancy casts dishonour upon the Lord. It throws suspicion upon the adequacy of His resources. He has imposed a task for which He has not provided the strength! The mission is appointed, but the needful equipment is withheld! We are ready, but God is lacking! Thus do we sit in judgment upon the Lord,

while all the time our apparent prudence is disloyalty and our seeming wisdom is only the deadliest unbelief.

In our Christian warfare we are to stick at nothing. To believers in Christ the impossible is to shine in the attractive light of a glorious assurance. We are to approach boggy and trackless wastes in the confidence that thoroughfares have been provided. "And a highway shall be there and a way!" We are to march against terrific and hoary fortresses in the joyful certainty that we can overturn them to their deepest and most secret foundations. "Mighty to the pulling down of strongholds!" This is to be the shining distinction of the army of the Lord. It is to move against the impossible, and by the very character of its stride it is to compel the world to believe that the impossible is already being accomplished. The Church is not here to do what anybody else can do. She is not one of a hundred institutions standing with them in common rank and file. The Church does not share her errand. She stands alone, and her mission is to do the impossible, to achieve wonders of which no other fellowship even dreams.

But the impossible can become our achievement only through a vital faith in a living Christ. A credal connection is not a vital communion. There is connection by marriage which knows no kinship in blood. A living faith drinks Christ's blood—yes, drinks Christ's very life into the soul, and so equips the soul to meet the world and the flesh and the devil with the holy vitality of the eternal Son of God. When we drink Christ's blood and then step out to face our tasks, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low."

XXII

THE PRICE OF LIBERTY

"The spirit cried and rent him sore and came out of him."

MARK ix. 26.

AND so the evil spirit was expelled, but only at the price of a great convulsion. Spiritual tyrants do not relinquish their thrones without a struggle. The pangs of emancipation were so severe that it seemed as if the escape into freedom was almost worse than the misery of bondage. And that is one of the antagonisms always encountered at every crusade which seeks to serve the cause of liberty. The devil cries and rends the victim sore; and sometimes the onlookers and even the victims are inclined to say, "Better to have left it alone! Better to have borne the ills we had than pass to something which is possibly worse!" So the remedy seems more dreadful than the disease, and the oppression in Egypt is preferred to the hardships of the wilderness.

But we are never going to acquire a rich and fruitful liberty without sore and rending struggle. There can be no large emancipation without an agony. We cannot loose bonds without inflicting and enduring wounds. That is true in the history of peoples. When has a social evil been expelled without tremendous struggle? When the watchword of emancipation rang through the Northern States the evil spirit of slavery seated itself more firmly and sternly upon its throne, and held its victims in fiercer grasp. A tyranny of that order is not expelled with the ease with which one might throw a chain out of a window. All the powers of hell are mobilised, and expulsion is a tearing and a raving business. How is it with the evil spirit of the opium trade? Is the deliverance going to be effected as easily and serenely as we might put up the shutters at a place of business and quietly turn the key and walk away? No, there is grim fighting ahead, and the evil spirit will tear and rend us sore before it is banished from the precincts of humanity. Or how is it with the liquor trade? Who expects a bloodless emancipation? The very threat of

expulsion has consolidated vested interests, and there is an agonising struggle ahead before the evil spirit will be driven from our corporate life. Evil spirits never calmly accept their note of dismissal; they fight like tigers for their lairs.

And so it is in the individual life. We cannot purchase our moral freedom as easily as we can obtain a passport over a counter. It is a tremendous business to expel a well-housed and well-established evil spirit from any life. Even when the Saviour commands the expulsion there is a fearful reluctance, and a terrible clinging to its polluted throne, and a grim determination to hold its sovereignty to the very end.

But let it be noted that the evil spirit, which was being expelled by the Lord, exerted the utmost force of its destructive strength at the very moment of its expulsion. Just then, at the very instant of going out, when victory was almost attained, it threw its victim to the ground until he was as one dead. And so here again the darkest hour precedes the dawn, and the deadliest struggle is just before the final triumph.

XXIII

THE DYNAMICS OF EXPULSION

"This kind goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting."
MARK ix. 29.

THE evil spirit was still enthroned. The disciples had been unable to cast it out. The victim remained in his awful servitude. In some way or other the divine, liberating energies had been impeded, and did not flow in emancipating strength. The disciples commanded, but there was no expulsion. Their word did not issue as a work. The words which they spake were not spirit, they were not life. There was something wrong. The ministers were not equal to their task. Their power was inadequate. The current was defective, and in these relationships a defective current always means there is something wanting in the wires. We are not straitened in God, we are not straitened in ourselves. "Why could not we cast him out?"

In answer to their puzzled inquiry, the Lord gives a twofold explanation of their defeat. First, He traces their lack of power to a deficiency of prayer, which always implies imperfect spiritual communion. And with this primary lack he names the neglect of fasting, which has resulted in the physical imprisonment and oppression of the spirit. The body had been allowed too much licence, and the spirit was given too little freedom. The body had trespassed beyond its appointed boundaries, and the spirit had not entered into its purposed inheritance. And because of this double negligence they had limited the Holy One to Israel. The dislodging powers of His Spirit were hindered, and they could not work in the ministry of a strong and gracious expulsion. The bodies and souls of His ministers were not fully surrendered, and because of this defective consecration they could not receive the needful strength. They had the form of words, but they lacked the power.

Now these two causes are operative in our own day, and because of these negligences evil tyrannies are still upon their thrones. We neglect our bodies. We allow them to be

masters when they are intended to be servants. We pamper them. We are afraid to confront them with a stern denial. We shrink from assigning seasons of healthy abstinence. Often the very last thing we are prepared to do is to curb our appetites, and hold our passions under chains like hungry hounds. And the pampered always means a fettered spirit. "Take heed," said the Master, "lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting."

The obtrusiveness of the body always disinherits the soul. For when the body usurps dominion the freedom of the spirit is impaired. The soul is like an eagle which is confined to the barn-yard when he was made to wing his flight through vast reaches in the upper air. The soul is imprisoned in the inch instead of journeying in the infinite. The spiritual powers, which were intended to explore the secrets of God, move on the surface of things. And so it comes to pass that, being straitened in ourselves, the grace of God is straitened. God has no large, open medium through which to pour His holy power. And because of lack of power we cannot hurl iniquities from their thrones.

We see the evil tyranny, but we cannot move it! We command it to go, but it laughs in our faces! "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

XXIV

EVILS THAT NEVER ARRIVE

“Who shall roll us away the stone?”

MARK xvi. 3.

THIS needless anxiety may stand as a common type of innumerable worries concerning difficulties which never arrive. How anxiously these women had grappled with the disturbing problem of their own weakness! They yearned to do the last love-service to the dear Body of their Lord. “But who will roll us away the stone? We shall not be able to move it! And no one will be about at that early hour! It will be still dark and the gardener will not have come to his work! We may take our spices to the grave, but the stone barrier will mock our weakness, and we shall have to turn home again!” And so they fretted and worried, and they saw no way out. And, still fretting and worrying, they went to the tomb. “*And they found the*

stone rolled away from the sepulchre. For the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door." All their worry had been quite unnecessary. The difficulty which they had foreseen never arrived.

And that is only one example of countless others in which we bother about things for which our Father had made ample provision. The angel has already received his commission, and at the appointed time he will remove the stone. But still we are inclined to worry all along the way. When we are converted by the saving grace of Christ we are often seriously troubled and anxious about the new road. We are fearful as to how it will fare with us when the tempter straddles across the way. And what about the Slough of Despond? How shall we get over it? And how shall we be able to climb the hill Difficulty? And with many other such fretful questions we worry our hearts. And they are all needless burdens which we are fashioning for ourselves. There is an angel ministry in all these things. But the trouble is we forget the angel, and whenever we leave the angel out of the reckoning we see

insuperable barriers everywhere, and we are sore afraid. The angel is before us on the road, and when we come to the fearful place we shall find that his work is done.

How many believers in Christ wonder how their faith will stand when sickness comes, or when old age creeps on, or when they see the shadow of death stealing across the familiar fields to their own house door! How will it be when sorrow comes round us like a threatening flood? We worry as to whether we shall be able to stand in the fierce current, and, having done all, to stand. Who has not known these forebodings? We look forward to some possible Gethsemane, but the trouble is we forget the angel who ministers in that garden of gloom. "And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him." We forget that gracious willing angel, as we are inclined to forget all the secret ministries which are appointed to serve us in dark places. They are in the wilderness of temptation just as they are in the Garden of Gethsemane. "Behold angels came and ministered unto him." If we leave the angel out of our thinking the stone will appear an over-

whelming hindrance. But if we think of the angel we can quietly believe that the stone will be rolled away. And so shall it be with the last great fear. We wonder what will happen to our faltering spirits when we come to the dark river. Everything seems so uncertain, and no one has come back to bid us be of good cheer. Oh, yes, Someone has come back, and He says to us: "Peace be unto you! When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee."

XXV

RETURNING IN POWER

“And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.”

LUKE iv. 14.

OUR Master had been at the familiar place in life where there are many roads but only one right one. And the wrong roads were decked with all sorts of shining allurements. And the allurements were all the more perilous because they had a suggestion of religion and piety about them. The wrong road was made to look as though it led up to a church. There was a sound of church bells, as though a subtle temptation had been wedded to a call to worship. That is the most insidious trial in life, when the church bells are ringing on the broad road that leadeth to destruction.

But our Master knew the broad road, even though it was carpeted with flowers. He

knew the egotism which lay concealed under seeming homage. He knew the difference between faith and presumption. He knew the infinite contrast between a swelling imperialism and the holy Kingdom which He had come to found in sacrificial blood. And so with all His might He fought the tempter and overthrew him, and with richly invigorated strength He went forth to His work in Galilee.

Our Master had been in the wilderness of temptation, and He returned with a vaster equipment for His holy service. The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; but here the thief had been robbed, and the despoiler had been spoiled. The tempter had been made to strengthen the tempted. The very temptation had been coerced into a minister of increased resources. The Lord Jesus emerged in power! The wilderness had become a school, a gymnasium, a scene of combat and wrestling; and, so far from being spiritually destroyed, the Master put on strength and victory like a robe. As Samuel Rutherford quaintly says, in one of his letters to Marian McNaught: "God can make a stepping-

stone of the devil himself for setting forward His work!"

And all this teaches me how I must think about my temptations. I must look upon temptation as opportunity. I must regard it, not as something to be feared, but as something to be spoiled. It is like some frowning, bristling city which I am to overthrow and sack. The bigger the temptation the richer the booty! The harder the conflict the more robust shall be my strength. And so it is that the Apostle counsels us to count it all joy when we fall among temptations! They are often full of menace, but splendid wealth hides behind the guns! Refuse to yield and the wealth is yours! Our manifold temptations are just the threatening side of manifold treasures. If we overcome the tempter we shall return in power.

And so it is that we are never so near great riches as when we are sorely tried. That is surely very heartening. In great temptations we are being favoured with a shining opportunity, and we are to count it all joy. We must fix our minds upon the rich possibilities, and with all the strength of our being resolve that they shall be realised. Let

us maintain a positive attitude to our foe. Let us fight the good fight of faith, assured that every victory will make us nobler soldiers. And let us fight in the holy fellowship of the Captain of our Salvation, who, Himself being tempted, turned His wilderness into a place of springs, and who will so strengthen His disciples that their wilderness and solitary place shall be glad, and their desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

XXVI

THE OLD TACKLE AND THE NEW PRESENCE

“Launch out into the deep.”

LUKE v. 4.

THE disciples had just washed their nets after a fruitless night. The labour of washing nets is light when we have had a splendid haul; but washing the nets when we have not caught any fish is a fearfully wearying task. Walking the long street when we have plenty of remunerative work is one thing; walking the same street when we are looking for work takes the very spring out of body and soul. Labour, infused with a spirit of disappointment and depression, is always burdensome toil. And it was after they had been engaged in this sort of cheerless work that the Master came upon His disciples. They were washing ineffective nets! And Jesus said unto Simon, “Launch out into the deep!” What, after the fruitless night, after toiling for nothing? The same thing over again?

No, it is not the old thing over again. It is certainly the old tackle, the old nets, and perhaps the old methods; but it is the old equipment with a new Presence, the immediate Presence of the Lord. "And they inclosed a great multitude of fishes."

Have we not had similar happenings in our own experience? In much of our service we have been very busy, but no business has been done. We have had all needful equipment, and we have had the right sort of nets, but we have caught nothing. The organisation was seemingly perfect, but there was nothing to show for the work. Perhaps we were out on the waters without Jesus. We had forgotten nothing except the Lord, and when we have forgotten Him we might as well have left everything behind. Suppose we take the old tackle and the neglected Presence! The old nets are all right; only let us cast them at the command of the immediate Lord, and we shall have miraculous revelations of power and grace.

And is there not some counsel here for theological students? One of the most perilous periods in a minister's life is the preparatory season when he has nothing to

do but study theology. It is possible to go out on that fine quest without the Lord. They are noble waters to fish in, but we may catch little or nothing. At any rate, we may go through the seminary and gain no pearls of great price. In this preparatory service of getting ready for service, Christ must be in the boat or nothing will come of it. It must surely be a wonderful thing to study theology in the personal companionship of the Lord! Such fishing in those deep waters must haul in vital treasure.

And so it is with us preachers. We sometimes go on our great journeys without Christ, and we have disappointment and tiring endings. The tackle is all right: we throw the nets all right, but the vital Presence is missing, and we pitiably fail. "With Christ in the vessel I'll smile at the storm." We shall do much more than that! We shall do great work in the stormy waters, for hath He not said, "I will make you fishers of men"?

XXVII

THE NOBLE DISSATISFACTION

"Blessed are ye that hunger now."

LUKE vi. 21.

THAT is one of the constant and full-sounding notes of the New Testament, the healthiness of a certain sort of hunger, the blessedness of a certain type of want. We hear its clarion in the first beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." For who are the poor in spirit but those who recognise their present poverty in comparison with their possible achievement? Every new possession in the inheritance of grace only increases their hunger for what remains to be claimed. Beyond the inch they hunger for the mile, beyond the mile they hunger for the league. They are never satisfied. In their hearts there is always the holy sense of want. The good unfolds to them the better. The better unveils the best. And beyond the inconceiv-

able best there is the world of the inconceivable, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which the wing of the strongest imagination is altogether unable to reach. And so these folk are hungry, and gloriously dissatisfied, "moving about in worlds not realised."

I suppose it is just here that we come upon the deadly lack in the soul of the Pharisee. The Pharisee had no hunger, no healthy, disturbing sense of want. He knew no consciousness of poverty. He regarded himself as rich. He was satisfied. He had attained. His life had no regions beyond. There stretched beyond him no entrancing prospect of territory yet to be traversed and won. He had no aching aspiration, no tense muscle of endeavour, striving in ever more wonderful crusades. He had arrived. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up: take thine ease!" That was the spirit of pharisaism. And it was to the Pharisees that the Master gave this awful and startling warning: "Woe unto you that are full!"

Now it is the dissatisfied who are the world's benefactors; I mean not only those who are dissatisfied with their own attain-

ments, but with the attainments of the race. They are possessed by a great sense of want. They cry with the prophet, "Woe is me, for I am unclean, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips!" They are hungering for something both for themselves and for the race. They see the crooked and they yearn to make it straight; they see the rough places and they are eager to make them plain. They are nobly dissatisfied, and at the heart of their dissatisfaction there is a driving ambition for a richer and fuller life. We owe everything to these hungry souls. They cannot be at rest, and in their restlessness is the promise of our richer peace.

It is evident that this noble hunger is associated with a larger vision. Nay, the hunger is the offspring of the vision. They have seen the New Jerusalem, "adorned as a bride prepared for her husband," and they are profoundly dissatisfied with the Jerusalem that is, and they labour to remove her meanness and her sordidness, and to clothe her in the strength and beauty of heaven's glory. Yes, it is the great vision which stirs the great yearning. It is when they have seen the Lord that the sluggish dwellers in Lotus-

land become keen and daring knights who go forth to build and establish the Kingdom of God. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

XXVIII

THE MALADY OF NOT WANTING

“Woe unto you that are full.”

LUKE vi. 25.

SOME of our Saviour's severest words were spoken to just this sort of people. The people had no sense of want. They were fully contented. Their journey was ended, and they had arrived at their goal. There was nothing alluring them which was still beyond their reach. There was no urging hunger for the beyond. Desire was dead. They were full! When they looked upon the Master they had no vision of untraversed worlds. There was no beauty that they should desire Him. They saw nothing they wanted. Now, people of this kind were the gravest problems with which our Lord had to deal. He could light the smouldering lamp of a poor publican, who, in his dejection, would not so much as lift his eyes to heaven. And he could recover some poor

woman who was a sinner, and who stood before him in aching silence. But who can pour wine into a full cup? Who can place treasure in a locked hand? Who can teach those who know everything? Who can save the righteous? "Woe unto you that are full!"

"The ill of all ills is the lack of desire." So sings Faber, and we can test ourselves whether or not that greatest ill is lodged in our own life. All we have to do is to get into the Presence of Jesus Christ. Have we any sense of want when we stand before Him? Have we any sharp conviction of poverty? Is there anything in our souls which resembles the stricken feeling of utter crudeness which afflicts some amateur artist when he brings his own works among the finished works of a great master? Is there any height, or depth, or breadth which stagger us in their range? Is there any holiness glistening far above us like virgin snow on Alpine heights? Is there any love, stronger than sin, or death, or hell? Is there any grace, invincible as granite, and yet tender as the violet that nestles in a cleft of the granite? When we stand before our Saviour

have we any sense of awful want? Have we any vision of unsearchable riches? Or are we full, and we want none of it? Do we say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up! Take thine ease?" Then our satisfaction is the ominous sign of spiritual death. Woe unto you that are full.

"Blessed are ye that hunger now!" But suppose we do not hunger, *and we know we do not?* Well, we can take sides against ourselves. We can set our wills against our own desireless hearts. We can force ourselves upon our knees in the Presence of the Lord whose grace and beauty we do not crave. We can tell Him we have no fire in our grate, and we know it, and that the pity is we have scarcely any desire for it. And we can say to Him, "Thou seest how great is my need of Thee!" We can present our desireless hearts for His recreating grace. And what will happen? "In the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert." And some day, and perhaps very soon, the desireless heart which is thus offered to the Lord shall break out in singing, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside Thee."

XXIX

SENTIMENTALISM

"I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest."
LUKE ix. 57.

SURELY that was the speech of a sentimental-ist! I think of sentimentalism as ill-formed sentiment. It is like over-new wine that lacks the rich, substantial properties of maturity. It is very thin and very tasteless. Noble sentiment is deep feeling wedded to lofty thinking. When the feeling is separated from the thinking, sentiment degenerates into sentimentalism. It then becomes a very precarious thing. It endureth but for a little while and passes away like a transient shower which has scarcely moistened the ground. And this man, whose impulsive word has suggested this meditation, was a man who put no deep and serious thought into things. He lived in feeling. There was no gravity about his behaviour. He ap-

proached everything as though he were going to a picnic. His movements were never distinguished by the deep solemn emotions of a man marching as to war, or riding forth to the gloomy home of the tempest.

Now our Lord never allowed anything that seemed like sentimentalism to pass unchallenged. He called it to a halt while He questioned its worth. He tested all light words, all apparently light words, as a tradesman tests suspicious coins upon the counter. Do they ring true, or is their response a dull leaden thing like unto death? This man's impulse was tested when the Lord sharply turned His eyes away from the light furnishings of a picnic to the heavy desolations of a perilous and lonely road. "And Jesus said, foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

And the inference of the Saviour's words is this: "Thy sentiment is sufficient for the quiet meadows. How will it fare on the field of battle? Thou art equipped for ways of comfort. How wilt thou fare in the midst of homelessness? Can thy sentiment endure the chilling midnight, or will it fail when the

first cold shadow falls upon it?" That was the Master's test. And I have often wondered if this man still followed Jesus in the way. Was he found in Gethsemane and near the Cross? Or did he turn back and walk no more with Him? And therefore may we not say that the smell of the fire tries every man's work, every man's sentiment, of what sort it is.

There was another occasion when one of these easy-speaking men rushed into the presence of the Lord. "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" We know the kind. Their speech is a little over-sweetened with the words like "dear" and "beloved." These words drip off the tongue with well-oiled fluency. And this man came with a familiar courtesy and applied it to the Lord. How did the Master receive him? "Why callest thou Me good?" Jesus challenged the word. He turned the man back upon his own speech. He made the man think. "What is there in thy word? Is there any reality behind it? Does thy speech contain the blood of thy heart? Or is it mere froth, meaning nothing? Why callest thou Me good?"

And so our Lord tests our words to-day. Are the words we use in worship the vehicles of truth and vital sentiment? Is the sentiment the rich product of sober thought, the very cream of deep and quiet contemplation? We say, or we sing, "Dear Saviour!" Might He not say of us, "Why callest thou Me dear?" And we frequently address Him as "Master." Might He not turn and challenge us with the word, "Why callest thou Me Master?" Sometimes we speak to Him as "our dear Redeemer." "Why callest thou Me Redeemer?" All such words are brought to judgment. Are they true, or are they counterfeit? Do they ring true? "Whatsoever things are true," let us bring them unto the Lord. Let us not offer unto the Lord words that cost us nothing. Let us avoid all sentimentalism as we would avoid a spiritual fever. Let us carefully mark the difference between fever and fervour, between a diseased heat and a healthy glow which will burn through the longest and most tempestuous day.

XXX

THE PEDANTIC CONSCIENCE

"Ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs,
and pass over judgment and the love of God."

LUKE xi. 42.

It is possible to overlook large ends in our obtrusive care for small ones. It sometimes happens that we cannot see the wood for the trees. A man may be so intent upon a tombstone that he cannot see the Church. He may be so absorbed in ecclesiastical machinery that he overlooks eternal truth. He can fix his eyes upon his boots and never have a glimpse of the mountains. He can be so engaged with mint and rue that he never catches sight of God's righteousness, which is "like the great mountains," and of God's judgments, which are "like the great deep." And all this breeds an extraordinary delusion; we come to think that tithing mint and rue is more vital than reflecting the life and love of God. The lesser thing begins to satis-

fy the soul which was intended to find its bread in the infinite. A sprig of mint supplants the tree of life.

Now this delusion seizes upon the soul with great subtlety. It hides itself behind apparent patches of grace. It inclines a man who has violated the holy law of gratitude to find a soothing consolation in charities. The man who gives unfair wages seeks satisfaction in building a row of almshouses. The jerry-builder, who just throws his houses together, makes atonement for the flimsy structure by putting in a pretty wall-paper and plenty of electric bells. We find delight in a trifling conscientiousness while the big necessities are overlooked. We live and love in little byways of truth and virtue, and not in the great highways of the exceedingly broad commandments of God. And so all the big things are belittled. Charity takes the place of love. An occasional kindness becomes the substitute for righteousness. Ecclesiastical postures are more to be desired than the piety which worships the Lord in spirit and in truth.

The smaller things are purposed by our God to be the adjuncts of the bigger things;

better still, they are purposed to be their fruits and not their substitutes. Our holiness is to be the explanation of our tithes. Our love is to be the fountain of our beneficence. The love of Christ is to constrain us! We are to pass from the big things to the smaller things, from the Great White Throne to our social courtesies, and from Calvary to our beneficence. Everything is to have the seal of the highest. "We love because He first loved." We are to tithe our very mint and rue because He gave Himself for us.

XXXI

A RECEIVER OF WRECKS

“This man receiveth sinners.”

LUKE xv. 2.

THE title which I have given to this meditation may sometimes be seen as one of the headlines on the business announcements of certain men on the Northwest coast of Canada. They advertise themselves as “receivers of wrecks.” The first time I saw the phrase it struck me with peculiar impressiveness, and my mind travelled very quickly to the work of our Lord. For, in a way, that is altogether unique. Jesus of Nazareth was a “receiver of wrecks.” He did not come into the world for the sake of “them that are whole.” He came for the sake of the boats that have been driven out by tempests, and smashed against the rocks and can hardly keep afloat. He came to befriend the derelicts, the mere hulls that have lost compass, and engine, and sails, and are just drifting

about the envious deep. "This man receiveth wrecks."

Nobody else wants them. Where is there a friendly coastguardsman in all New York or London except he be a disciple of Jesus Christ? Where is there an open, hospitable harbour except those which Jesus Christ Himself has built? I think of one home which flashes out the invitation, "Refuge for the destitute"! And I love the shining line at the Water Street Mission, "Drunkards specially invited!" But these are Christ's harbours, and the men on the lookout belong to His brave crew. But where is there a non-Christian haven for wrecks? Who is there who receives these human derelicts, and receives them to recreate them, and to send them out again, with banners flying, to do saving work on the very waters where they met their ruin?

It seems a long way back to Cotter Morison, and his forgotten book, "The Service of Man," and I only recall it because of one sentence in which he confesses the impossibility of converting derelicts into sound seagoing liners: "It is no use disguising the matter, there is no remedy for a bad heart."

That is to say, the wreck can never sail again! Jesus Christ never says that of anybody. No boat is ever "too far gone." What Chesterton says of Browning can be said of our Saviour in an altogether incomparable way: "He was the friend of outcasts whom even outcasts cast out." He had no impossibles. "Even though he were dead yet shall he live!" Yes, the old wrecks are refashioned, they are new creations in Christ Jesus. This Man receiveth wrecks: they come into His harbour heavy-laden and almost sinking; and they sail out again under the banner of His love, and behold! all things are become new!

XXXII

THE SUPREME TEST

“Faithful in that which is least.”

LUKE xvi. 10.

WE make a great mistake if we regard this faithfulness in that which is least as an elementary attainment. It is not a sort of first standard qualification fitting a novice for the second standard. It is the honourable passing of a severe ordeal. It is, I think, probable that character is more surely revealed, and most certainly impoverished or enriched, in which seem to be the little occasions of life than in those which seem to be great. It is likely that the real test comes not in the crisis of some single crashing event, but in the long-drawn-out process of wearisome and smaller events. The big sensation is not as revealing as the little irritation. The surgical operation, coming and going in an hour, is not as trying as pin-pricks continued through a year. Who has

not known people who could call out reserves and triumphantly encounter what other folks called a crisis, but who lost themselves in such trifling things as the loss of a shilling or a dollar? Gulliver could face a giant with equanimity; the dwarfs of Lilliput put him in bonds. There are multitudes of women who put on strength and majesty like a robe when they go forth to meet calamity, but "servant troubles" knock them to pieces! They can face an occasional encounter with wild oxen, but mice play havoc with them. They command the crisis, but they fall before the commonplace.

"He is greatest in his own classroom!" That was the testimony given by an eminently qualified student concerning one of the greatest and most powerful men of our time. He was a giant on small occasions. He revealed himself at his mightiest, not when he faced vast assemblies and received the homage of tumultuous applause, but when he was out of sight, when the crowd was away, and no reporter was linking him with the wider world. It is an index of rare wealth of character, and the test is specially pertinent

to all who claim to be followers of Christ. Is the power of our spiritual current evident in commonplace tasks? Does it tingle even in apparent trifles? Are there flavours of the King's gardens in our passing courtesies? Is there about us the fragrance of the Kingdom when we are out of sight? Is the King's superscription on the penny as well as on the pound? Is it stamped on our unrehearsed conversation as clearly as on our prepared and conventional speech? Is it sealed on the secret thought as well as on the public deed? Are we faithful "in that which is least"?

And so I think that the folk who are faithful in that which is least wear very radiant crowns. They are the people who are great in little tasks. They are scrupulous in the rutty roads of drudgery. They are the folk who, when they are trudging "through the valley of Baca make it a well." They quietly continue on the dutiful road even when hornets are buzzing around. They win their triumphs amid small irritations. They are as loyal when they are wearing aprons in the kitchen as if they wore purple and fine linen in the visible presence of the

King. They finish the obscurest bit of work as though it were to be displayed before an assembled heaven by Him who is Lord of Light and Glory. Great souls are these who are faithful in that which is least!

Our Lord Jesus lived for thirty years amid the little happenings of the little town of Nazareth. Little villages spell out their stories in small events. And He, the young Prince of Glory, was in the carpenter's shop. He moved amid humdrum tasks, and petty cares, and village gossip, and trifling trade, and He was faithful in that which is least. He wore His crown on other than state occasions. It was never off His brow.

And if these smaller things in life afford such riches of opportunity for the finest loyalty, all our lives are wonderfully wealthy in possibility and promise. "The daily round, the common task, should furnish all we ought to ask." Even though our house is furnished with commonplaces it can be the home of the Lord all the days of our life.

XXXIII

FAINTING

“Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”

LUKE xviii. 1.

SUPPOSE we turn the counsel into a promise : “Men ought always to pray and *they will not faint.*” When a man faints in the day of adversity it is because a line of communication has somehow been cut, and he has lost touch with his base of supplies. He has become separated from his spiritual resources, and in the heavy demands of the campaign he has begun to lose heart. The heart retains its hope and courage so long as new forces and new supplies arrive. It is not the growing strength of the enemy, nor the increasing exactions of duty, which make the heart succumb; it is the lessening of its supplies. When the spiritual lines of communication are kept open the fierceness of our engagements does not matter: “though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall

not fear.” That open line always means a defeated foe. The heart sings in the battle, for it is always more than even with the most tremendous task.

Now it is prayer which keeps open the road between the soul and its resources. That great line of communication is kept clear like a splendid highway, and the sacred transports are arriving every moment in an all-availing sufficiency. The supplies are waiting: prayer opens the way and receives them. It is not left to our judgment to determine what we need. God’s loving wisdom interprets the need. It is our part to open our souls to the grace and bounty of an infinite God, and the necessities are supplied. Prayer is a minister of the open road, and prayer is a minister of reception.

When we cease to pray the open highway is blocked and closed. The waiting supplies cannot reach us: they cannot get past our spiritual forgetfulness and indifference. And so the big duty daunts us; the strong enemy affrights us. We become faint, and the battle goes against us. And all the time the resource which would meet our necessity is awaiting our honest call! Let us restore

communication by recovering our communion. Let us pray without ceasing! Let us keep the roads open, and our gracious God will see to the transports.

XXXIV

DOING THE IMPOSSIBLE

"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

LUKE xviii. 27.

WE have not to travel far before we meet the impossible. We soon reach the end of the short road of "the possible," and then the impossible looms before us! It is possible to restrain a man from crime; it is impossible to restrain him from sin. We can compel a man to pay his income tax; it is impossible to compel him to be generous. We can readjust man's circumstances; we cannot renew a man's heart. We can educate; we cannot regenerate. We can re-furnish a man's mind; we cannot give him the mind of Christ. We can give him courtesy; we cannot endow him with grace. We may give him good manners; we cannot make him a good man. We may save him from worldly excesses; we cannot make him immune from the contagion of the world. We

may "patch up a bad job," but we have no power of new creation.

And so we touch our "impossible" almost at a stride. The "impossibles" stare upon us on every side. How then? It is only in God and in the power of his holy grace that the impossible thing can be realised. In the Lord Jesus miracles may happen every day; they are happening every day. But in our pathetic folly we go on trying to mend the broken earthenware, when the mighty God would recreate the vessel. We rely upon the ministry of good fellowship when we can do nothing without the communion of the Holy Ghost. We use social cosmetics upon a withered and wizened society, and the holy Lord is waiting with the unspeakable quickening of the new birth. We use rouge when we really need the blood of the Lamb.

The world is always arrested when it sees impossibles being accomplished. In God the impossible becomes possible!

"Though earth and hell the Word gainsay,
The Word of God can never fail;
The Lamb shall take my sins away,
'Tis certain, though impossible.
The thing impossible shall be.
All things are possible to me."

XXXV

DIVINE VISITATIONS

"Thou knowest not the time of thy visitation."
LUKE xix. 44.

God visits us in opportunity. The dawn of opportunity is the unveiling of His presence. When the door opens upon the way of sacrifice and enlargement, He is there! No longer does He visit us in bodily form; He comes in the form of circumstance. He speaks to us in the voice of events. We may behold His comings and goings in the movements of our day. We may see Him in a tendency, we may hear Him in a challenge, we may find Him in the midst of upheaval and unrest. He comes to us in the brightness of some glorious hope, being "clothed with light as with a garment"; and he comes to us in the shadow of some chilling disappointment, visiting us "in the night seasons."

It is therefore a fine attainment in grace to be able so to interpret events as to discern

the presence of the Lord. We are advancing in the school of the Spirit when we know the time of His visitation, when we can look upon the robe of light or the pale of darkness, and say, "It is the Lord!" But when events have no divine significance, when they are empty as a drum, life becomes a very hollow procession—indeed, it is scarcely a procession at all, but just a disorderly assemblage of blind and warring instincts, rushing out of the night and into the night again.

To recognise the divine visitation, and to discern the Visitor! To know Him as He comes to the door! "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." How may we know His knock? "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." "With what measure ye hear it shall be measured to you again." We need the consecrated ear, and the ear is sanctified in the consecrated heart. When the heart is sanctified all the senses are awake to the presence of the Lord. "Blessed are the pure in heart, *for they shall see God.*"

XXXVI

SELF-POSSESSION

“In your patience ye shall possess your souls.”
LUKE xxi. 19.

To possess one's soul is an infinitely grander thing than to possess some magnificent estate. There is many a man who owns thousands of broad acres who has never owned the fair realm of his own soul. Ask him for an inventory of his estate, and he will produce one recording the contents of every nook and corner in his wide domain. Ask him for an inventory of his soul! Ask him what sacred powers he has in the world within, and what control he has of them, and whether there is peace and harmony in that mysterious Kingdom! He can record his wealth in personality; ask him what treasures he has in personality! In what measure does he possess his own soul? There is something grimly ironical in a man owning many things and yet not owning himself. He

has gained the world ; he has never gained his own soul.

Now the secret of self-possession is to be found in Christ. It is through Him that we discover our souls. We find ourselves in finding Him. Our wealth of being is unveiled to us in the measure in which we enter into the revelation of His glory. Our endowments troop out at the call of His communion. The deeper our communion the wealthier is the response. The finer the climate the more luxurious is the growth. We never know how much there is in us until we are discovering how much there is in Christ. Our powers remain like sleeping seeds until "the heavenly air is breathing round."

We do not come into these possessions in a day. The title-deeds may be ours in a moment. They become ours by faith in the living Christ, and they are handed to us in the moment when faith is born. But every day of faithful walking with the Lord brings us more and more into the possession of our spiritual estates, as every day we have new surprises in "the unsearchable riches in Christ." Therefore "in your patience ye shall possess your souls."

XXXVII

THE TREACHEROUS KISS

“Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?”
LUKE xxii. 48.

To use a kiss in the ministry of betrayal is like using a sacramental cup to poison a friend. The very worst form of devilry is that which garbs itself in the robes of an angel of light. Evil which wears its own clothes is sufficiently repulsive, but it is not nearly so repulsive as when it counterfeits goodness, and decks itself in adornments stolen from the wardrobe of virtue. If betrayal comes with a curse and a frown we know how to interpret its approach, but when it comes with smiles and kisses it can deceive the very elect. This kiss of Judas wounded the Lord far more deeply than did the nails which fastened Him to the Cross.

And we, too, can do our evil behind appearances of virtue. We can plan mischief on our knees. We can appear unto men to

pray while all the time we may be busy hatching schemes to wrong our brother. We can even join the Lord's holy church for a badge of respectability. Our membership appears to throw the light of sanctity over our life, and the soft and mellow beams become a kind of screen behind which we can engage in questionable deeds. "Oh, she is a member of the church, and it must be all right!" And thus does membership act as a screen instead of being a lucid transparency through which we can see into the deepest depths of the consecrated soul. Yes, we can betray the Lord with a kiss!

Let us beware of religious cloaks. Let us beware of borrowing the livery of the saints to hide the devices of the sinner. If we are going to betray the Lord, let us do it openly, and not by assuming the mood and manners of a friend. But why betray the great Friend who sticketh closer than a brother? Let us rather pledge Him a deeper fealty, and conform our evil in ceaseless service and sacrifice.

XXXVIII

THE FRIEND ON THE ROAD

“Jesus Himself drew near.”

LUKE xxiv. 15.

THE Friend whose absence they were mourning was with them on the road. They walked in sadness because their minds were fastened upon a grave, and lo! the bars of death had been broken, and the buried One was even now at their side. They thought that the glory had departed, while all the time a greater glory had arrived. On that apparently desolate road there walked the Conqueror of death, the Lord of resurrection. It was not midnight, but sunrise with all the promise of a superlatively glorious day! They thought they were journeying westward, in the direction of spent and exhausted days; they were really journeying eastward, in the direction of a dawning of whose splendour they had never even dreamed.

And sometimes the darkness settles down

upon our life, and we think that all is over, and the blessedness is spent. There is a grave somewhere; maybe it is the grave of a loved one, or the grave of some fair, cherished hope, or of some fond and promising ambition. And that grave seems to be as big as the world. There is nothing else in the world but that grave. There is nothing left! Oh, yes, there is! Jesus is left; and He is mightier than death, and the Lord of every grave. He is left, and in Him the graves shall give up their dead. We shall be amazed what He will "bring with Him." Beautiful things which we thought were dead and buried will rise again in the power of His resurrection. Lovely hopes, which we thought had dropped and withered like autumn leaves, will appear again as everlasting flowers, blooming in the fair paradise of eternal life and love. And so let the assurance of this coming glory throw its brightness on the present bit of road. The Lord is with us, and in the day of unveiling, when He is revealed in all His fullness, the great surprise, next to His own holy presence, will be the once lost things which are manifested with Him in glory.

XXXIX

DULL SCHOLARS

“Slow of heart to believe.”

LUKE xxiv. 25.

I REMEMBER seeing a letter from a very distinguished officer who was serving in the Gallipoli campaign. And the following passage occurred in the letter: “I think God is waiting for England to learn many things before the war will end, and she is so very, very slow in learning.” I wonder how many of those things have been learned, and I wonder whether we have got them, as we say, by heart. Or were the lessons never really learned, and were they like the seed by the wayside which the fowls of the air have devoured? It may be that much of our present confusion is due to lack of understanding, and it may be that our want of understanding is due to our reluctance to learn of Christ and boldly follow the leading of His

Spirit. What kind of scholars have we been in the school of hard experience?

For instance, have we learned that the spiritual sides of things are always fundamental? Or are we still in materialistic bonds? How is it with us? How is it with our dominant aims? Are we spending money for that which is not bread, and are we labouring for that which satisfieth not? When we arrive at our own purposed ends do we enter a home of vital contentment and peace? Do material things constitute our goal, or are they only a thoroughfare to the secret things of the spirit? Do we believe that material things are only rightly handled when they are the instruments of God's holy will? Nay, even better than this, do we believe that things are only ordered aright when they become channels of God's spirit, and all uses are determined and pervaded by His love and grace? Have we learned that lesson? When everything becomes a spiritual medium all life is sacramental. God's holy presence moves among our common-places with the like reality in which He comes to us in sacramental bread and wine.

Things become highways and the King of Glory enters in.

On the other hand, things can be just things and nothing more. And our daily life can be spent in a jostle for things and nothing more. And we may estimate the prosperity of our years by the things which we accumulate and by nothing more. "All these *things* will I give thee." That is the temptation which lures us every day. Are we following the lure? After all the travail of the last five years are we still in hot pursuit of material things? Or have we learned some secrets of God's spirit, and are we turning from the feverishness of living to the cooler and more blessed experience of life? What kind of scholars have we been in the school?

And what about this second lesson? Have we begun to know what the Lord Jesus meant when He pronounced the great beatitude that "The meek shall inherit the earth"? Without any taint of hypocrisy have we walked any steps along the way of that wonderful experience? It is possible for a man to own an estate and not possess the landscape. Have we learned that lesson? A man

may own a library and have no taste for literature. A man may have the means to live and not be truly alive. A people may enlarge its empire and not enrich its own being. A nation can gain the world and lose its soul. And what shall it profit a nation if it gain the world and lose its soul? Have we learned any lessons in this realm of experience?

On the other hand it is possible "to have nothing and yet possess all things." The meek distil the spiritual essences of things. They gather manifold satisfactions from continents in which they do not own an inch. And who are the meek? They are the lowly in heart who share the yoke of Jesus, and who have learned in that wonderful fellowship to attain to true dominion. Meekness constrains by its gentleness. It enters into power through the ministries of service. It washes away the aggressive arrogance of men by washing their feet. It inherits the earth by giving itself to everybody.

XL

THE UNKNOWN CHRIST

“He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.”

JOHN i. 10.

THE past tense sometimes deludes us. The things we look at seem to be so far away. We are spectators of events and not actors. We are critics of the faults of others, and not their fellow culprits. When we read of the doings of far-off yesterdays we so easily assume the voice of the judge on the bench instead of taking our place at the side of the prisoner in the dock. We express ourselves in stern judgment and fiery indignation. We build ornate sepulchres in honour of the prophets whom our fathers murdered. Anybody can wax wroth over the iniquities committed a thousand years ago, but this sort of thing can be combined with a blindness towards similar iniquities in which we share to-day. Therefore it is a good thing to

change the tense of the record, to convert it into the present, and to read it as a transcript of what is happening in our time. Let us do so with this great word from the Gospel of John: "He is in the world, and the world is being made by Him, and the world knows Him not." The change in the tense makes the happening immediate. The event is going on. We are actors in the scene. The words beat with the pulse of the present day.

"The world knows Him not!" The unrecognised Christ! He is in our streets. He is busy in our common life. He is making a new world. And we do not know Him! Perhaps He is busy destroying things as a preparative to more constructive work, and we do not detect His presence as these old strongholds of iniquity crumble away. Or perhaps He is working away from the accepted spheres of power and influence and we have not looked for Him in such unlikely places. We have not expected any good thing to come out of Nazareth. We do not anticipate that the great Renewer will be attended by a retinue of fishermen. Perhaps we are looking for something spectacular,

and we have no sight for the quieter presences, the less glaring things which enter in at lowly doors. Or perhaps we are giving alien names to things which really belong to Him. We so frequently surrender the Master's treasures to the possession of the world. We fail to see His seal upon them. Some apparently common coin which bears the superscription of the Lord! Some "mere morality" which is really a fruit of the Spirit! Some virtue which is a child of grace! We do not see the marks of the Lord Jesus upon them. In all these ways and in a hundred more our Lord may be in the world, and the world is being made by Him, and we know it not.

One of the most precious endowments in the Christian life is an apprehending spirit, a healthy delicacy of soul, which can detect the hidden presence of the Lord. I think it is Bagehot who makes much of Shakespeare's "experiencing nature," a rich equipment of responsiveness which enables Shakespeare to enter into the lives of clowns and statesmen, of peasants and courtiers, or merchants and kings. Well, what we need as disciples of Christ is an experiencing na-

ture, exquisite in its apprehension, which can discern the secret place of the Lord. "Thy grace betrayeth thee!" And if we are to have this fine scent for the things of the King's gardens, we shall have to get rid of all our benumbment. Our spiritual senses may be deadened by sin, they may be blunted by formality. Prayerlessness makes us spiritually dull, while intercession makes us vigilant. Prayer makes us watch. We become alive unto God.

XLI

THE 'WORST AND THE BEST

"He knew what was in man."

JOHN ii. 25.

OUR Lord has always known what is in every man. Everything is transparent. The rose-bush does not hide the refuse-heap. The stage-play of piety does not conceal the life behind the scenes. We have no secret chambers. He knows all about our most private rooms. Here, at any rate, all camouflage is useless. He sees the thought that has never yet found words. He sees the ugly purpose which is hiding like a snake in the grass. He sees the desire that will not die, but which will not show its face in the street. The Lord knows all about us. We are glass-houses, and everything is manifest. And this should fill us with holy fear: "Thou, God, seest me!"

But there is another way of looking at the apostle's word, and this other way is

full of inspiration. The Lord certainly knows my worst, and yet He it is who has the best hopes for me. That is to me one of the most wonderful of all wonderful things. He who knows my worst has more hope for me than they who know my best. My best is only very blind and lame, and it does not offer much promise of anything very splendid that is coming. And so it is that they who are allowed to see my best, my parade days, my prepared moments, are not very enthusiastic in their predictions of the marvelous conquests that await me. But the Saviour sees my very worst. He has turned it all over. Not a thing in all the sad heritage of my past has escaped Him. Not a bit of dirt has been overlooked. Not a sin has slipped by unnoticed. Not a hiding germ of disease in any one of my faculties or powers has gone unregistered. He knows it all, every item in the black collection. And having seen the worst His gospel music sings of the best! He uses such words as these to tell the brightness of His hopes concerning me—"perfect," "whole," "holy," "clean." And He amazes me when He seeks my intimate companionship, "that where I am there

ye may be also.” Yes, He who sees my worst has invincible hopes of the best.

This wonderfully hopeful way of looking at the worst is born of His unspeakable love. For it is one of the crowning distinctions of love that her sight is not only clear insight but radiant foresight. Love is Omega as well as Alpha, and she sees the shining end from the dull beginning. But better than all else is this—He who sees my worst is ready to become incorporate with me in all the vital intimacy of His redeeming sacrifice. At Calvary He becomes one with the shame of my worst that I may be enfolded in the grace and glory of His best. I am bound up in the same bundle of life with the Lord my God.

XLII

INCREASE AND DECREASE

“He must increase, and I must decrease.”

JOHN iii. 20.

AND yet that very decrease is the secret of sure growth. This sort of decrease is really a making of room for Christ. Our self-importance shrinks, and we grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. It is when we are full of self, self-opinionated, self-centred, self-seeking, that Christ is crowded out. That was the deadliness of much of the pharisaism in the time of our Lord. The life of the Pharisee was chock-full of self. Self ran over. It was like a warehouse which is so crowded that part of the stuff is piled outside around the door. You could not go near a Pharisee without running against his egotism. You were always touching his pride. It bulged out in everything, even in his prayers. “I thank Thee that *I* am not as other men; *I* fast twice in the week, *I* give

tithes." There is no room there for the Saviour. The house is too full. It is crammed with swelling self-conceit. That was the deadly element in the life of the Pharisee. He would not decrease. He would not become poor in spirit. And so, perhaps, in a very wide sense we may say that increase in the Christian life consists in making room for Christ. And if we knew it, it is in this one thing that we have the secret of everything. For even in the Christian life we are apt to cumber ourselves with many things. We may have too many rules. We have rules for this, and rules for that, and rules for the other. And it is like having a multitude of rules for playing golf. "Fifteen rules for the approach shot! Twenty rules to observe on the green!" And what a muddle we should make of it! And I am little or no better when I try to follow some books of devotion. Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living" puts me into bonds. "Twenty rules to observe in prayer"! "Twenty rules for the cultivation of charity"! And so on, and so on. I am over-harnessed. Nay, the harness burdens me more than my appointed load.

So I return very eagerly to Him who said, "Come unto Me, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Well, this is the one great secret in the Christian life—making room for Christ. The royal way is just to decrease in everything, and to let His increase be our strength and glory. Suppose we concentrated on that, and put all other rules on one side. Let the concentration be detailed and particular. I mean, break up life's days and take each circumstance as it comes, whether it be grave or gay, large or small. Let us meet each circumstance in this attitude, and with this spirit: "In this particular circumstance I must make room for Christ. He must increase, and I must decrease. It must be filled with His presence, and the happening must now and hereafter be fragrant with His grace." Surely this would make the long range of daily events one radiant line of consecration.

That seems to have been the way of the Apostle Paul. Here is his secret: "For to me to live is Christ." What is that but making room for Christ in everything? And here he states the secret again: "I live, yet

not I, Christ liveth in me.” Self decreases almost to the point of extinction—“Not I”—the apostle becomes complete in Christ. And so our hymn gives us the appointed attitude and aspiration:

“O Jesus Christ, grow Thou in me,
And all things else recede.”

XLIII

HATING THE LIGHT

"Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light."

JOHN iii. 20.

THE seedy garments, which pass muster in the dull low-grade light of the winter's day, reveal their wear and tear in the brighter and more searching light of the spring. We say about a shabby garment, "It is all right for dull days, but I shall want another when the bright days come!" Shabbiness hateth the light. Theatrical stage-effects may have a certain attractiveness in the limelight, but they make a woeful sight when they are brought into the sunshine. Unreality hateth the light. Is there any spectacle more pathetic than the scene of a carnival in the light of the following morning! The daylight makes Vanity Fair look pitiable.

And all these have their moral and spiritual analogies. There is a dull light of worldliness in which evil things do not reveal their

terror. There is a moral twilight in which even glaring wrong does not expose its hideousness. There are commonly accepted standards before which even shabby things do not appear mean. They are not brought under condemnation. They are not lifted into relief. They conform to accepted requirements, and the doers of them are not exposed to any discomfort or resentment. But when we bring this crooked conduct or this shabby character into the Presence of "the Light of life" the revelation is astounding. All mere paint and powder and cosmetics shrink from the sunlight; and in the glory of the Lord all our decorated evil and all our powdered hypocrisies show themselves for what they truly are. "Thou judgest us." "Our secret sins are seen in the light of Thy countenance."

And we do not like the exposure. We hate the light; we do not hate the sins which it reveals. We value comfort more than we welcome truth. We prefer a low satisfaction in the twilight to a healthy disquietude in the fuller day. I heard a man speak of his minister, and he spake in tones of eulogy, and this is what he said: "I like my minister;

he isn't always making me feel uncomfortable!" But how unapostolic was the experience! His minister must have led his devoted hearer into a spiritual twilight, for if he had kept him in the full blaze of "the uncreated beam" he would have been pricked in heart and he would have cried out, "What must I do to be saved?"

We are moving upward when we can humbly pray for the ministry of the eternal Light. "Search out our wickedness, O Lord, until Thou find none!" In such prayerful lives the light that searches and exposes the sin also consumes the unworthiness it reveals. "Our God is a consuming fire."

XLIV.

HEROIC GOODNESS

“He was a burning and a shining light.”
JOHN v. 35.

It is the combination of the two words “burning” and “shining” which portrays so distinguished and powerful a character. If either word be bereaved of the other the character it describes is ineffective. Light without heat! Who has not met the impotence? Heat without light! Who has not met the terror? It is the fellowship of the two which generates a fruitful power. The two together produce a luminous enthusiasm. We have zeal wedded to knowledge. We have an enlightened faith in communion with a passionate love. It is only when our souls have the double guardianship of light and heat that our life can be said to be safe. If I may so put it, we have the security of incandescence.

Now I think that the element which is

more commonly absent from our religious life is the element of heat. The majority of us know all that we need to know to be in the heavenly way, but we do not make much pace or progress. We are short of heat. There is nothing more annoying than to have to maintain a smouldering fire. It is always just on the point of going out. We stir it up and it sputters and flickers for a moment, but it soon becomes dull again. It is something like trying to keep the dormouse awake in Alice's Wonderland. On the other hand, a big, well-fed fire maintains its life by its own fervour. Its very passion is its defence. Its heat is its security. And so it is with the aspirations of the soul. So it is with all piety and devotion. If they are of the smouldering order our religious life will be more an annoyance than a strength and comfort. We shall always have to be attending to it, just as we watch an invalid. But if our religious life is of the burning and shining order, blazing with holy consecration and enthusiasm, the fire itself will be our best protection. Our ardour will be our friend.

Here is a sentence of Coventry Patmore's,

one of the many jottings which were found in manuscript after his death:—"If you wish to be good, the easiest, indeed, the only way, is to be heroically so." That is profoundly true. We are not going to be commonly good until we are uncommonly devoted to goodness. That is to say, the easiest way to do God's will on the ordinary road is to bring to each task and duty a life of uttermost consecration. It is only the really full life that will make little things live. If there is to be the heroic flavour in our ordinary fellowships it must be born out of a supremely surrendered life to the fellowship of God in Christ our Lord. We are too prone to try to be good on a perilously low pressure, and we cannot get along. There is no strength in our goodness. We are not impressive. It makes no mark. It cannot burn a trail! There is not heat enough. If we had more heat, if we were baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, the ordinary things of the ordinary day would pulse with the power of holy consecration.

XLV

LIVING WORDS

“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

JOHN vi. 63.

THIS passage is extraordinarily interesting. Here is our Lord speaking about His words, and He claims that His words are spirit and life. They are mystic incarnations of Himself. They carry the divine essence. They are the expressions of vital secrets. They come to the doors of our minds as living presences, instinct with the very life of God. His words are alive.

Let us contrast the Master's claim about His words with anything we can say about our own words. Sometimes our words have no content at all. They are empty. They are like envelopes which have lost their living secret in the post, and they come to us carrying nothing. Sometimes our words are delusive. They seem to carry one thing

when they are really carrying another. They are like Sacramental cups which carry anything but wine. And sometimes the contents of our words are deadening. There is nothing really vital or vitalising in them. They are ministers of heaviness and depression. They have no quickening power. They carry no life, no light, no flame. And over and against all our perverse and impoverishing speech, we have the claim of our Lord that His words are spirit and life. When we receive His words it is like taking angel-presences into our tent. We are entertaining spirit, and we are offering hospitality to life. His word is alive, and it makes alive, for it works in the soul like the quickening air of the spring.

And the words of the disciple can be like the words of the Master. It is His holy will that, when we speak about Him, when we proclaim His mind and will, our words should be spirit and life. He is waiting to hallow our words with His own indwelling, and our speech may be the tabernacle of the living God. When God uses our words, and fills them with His Spirit, our speech becomes sacramental, and even the indifferent

will be conscious of a mystic but most real Presence which the cynic and the worldling cannot explain away. If Christ abide in us our words will be like overflowing cups, and our treasure will be rich in divine authority and grace.

A great critic has recently said of Mr. John Masefield that his phrases carry no cargoes of wonder. I do not know what may be the value of this criticism; but I do know that no one ought to be able to say it with truth about any ambassador of the Lord. Imagine a man speaking about the unsearchable riches of Christ, and using words which carry no cargoes of wonder! Every time we speak of the Lord our words should be laden with cargoes of wonder, and so they will be if we are in central and vital fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Then shall it be said of us that our words are spirit and they are life.

XLVI

THE LAST BRIDGE

“Many of the disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”

JOHN vi. 66.

LADY JEUNE once asked Mr. Joseph Chamberlain why, in his opinion, so many men fall short of their ambition. And Mr. Chamberlain answered: “They come to the place where they turn back. They may have killed the dragon at the first bridge, and at the second, perhaps even at the third, but the dragons are always more formidable the further we go. Many turn back disheartened, and very few will meet the monsters to the end. Almost none is willing to have a try with the demon at the last bridge; but, if he does, he has won for ever.”

That is a very vivid interpretation of human experience. But it has a much wider application than the political world which Mr. Chamberlain had in mind. It is

supremely true of the highest relationships, even of the loftiest concerns of the soul. Many of us get through the earlier struggles, but we are daunted by the later foes. We get over the Slough of Despond, but we dare not face the castle of Beelzebub which stands just outside the wicket-gate. Or we pass the castle but we become fearful at the sight of the lions. Or if the lions are behind us, Apollyon makes us afraid. And all along the road we meet with pilgrims who are turning back because some new menace has robbed them of their courage. They were wearing the guerdons of many victories, but they fearfully assume that this last struggle will be beyond their strength, and so they turn back, and they lose all their guerdons in their retreat.

All this is a most unwise and deadly misunderstanding of our resources. For it is a law of grace that in the Christian life "every conquest won" prepared us for the next conflict, endowing us with all the needful equipment. The events in our spiritual life are not a loose mob, a gathering of unrelated fragments, no happening having any vital connection with the one that follows

on. In God's good grace the happenings become a series, and each becomes our servant to lead us to the next. When we have slain the lion the strength of the lion is in our loins when we march forward to meet Apollyon. So that if the dragons do become more formidable as we advance we are all the stronger to meet them. God will not allow us to be tried above that we are able.

And it sometimes, nay, it often happens, that the bridge we most feared had no defending forces when we arrived. "When they were past the first and the second wards, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city, which opened to them of its own accord, and they went out." That iron gate is often the easiest of all! The Angel of His Presence is with us all along the way, and if we are faithful to His call He will assuredly see us through.

XLVII

THE MINISTRY OF INFUSION

“He that believeth on Me . . . out of him shall flow rivers of living water.”

JOHN vii. 38.

THE Master speaks of men and women from whose lives flow “rivers of living water.” We must go to Egypt, or to Galilee, or to some parts of Asia Minor, if we want to gather the full power of the Saviour’s words. We must watch the streams of vitalising water irrigating the otherwise parched and barren ground. The river is the minister of quickening, and everything it touches lifts its head in an access of refreshing life. And there are lives whose influence is just like that. They are quickening ministers in social fellowship. The faint are heartened in their presence. The weary are refreshed. The sluggish are awakened. Those who have had a hard lot to till find mysterious powers of irrigation in their communion.

There is a certain positiveness about their life which stirs the hesitant, a certain strength of purpose which confirms the timid. They are "rivers of water of life," and the river flows in their silences as well as in their speech, when they quietly wait as when they adventurously serve.

Such is the inevitable influence of a life of faith. Where there is the vital belief there is bound to be the flowing river. The living issue is not an act of will, but the outcome of a relation. Our finest ministry is not so much a conscious as an unconscious influence. Our faith brings us into communion with the Foundations of life, and then every highway in our being becomes the channel of His holy grace. Everything becomes influential, our rest as well as our labour, our restraints as well as our freedom, our waiting as well as our acting, our silences as well as our speech. The power of our being is washing against other beings, irrigating, and fertilising, and refreshing the ground of the common life. "Every thing shall live whither the river cometh!"

There is a very suggestive sentence in one of Goldwin Smith's letters: "Gladstone,

though little open to argument, was very open to infusion; and I have always believed that Morley had a great hand in infusing into him Home Rule." That is the expression of a very commanding principle, and I think we find it in our Lord's teaching about the invisible river in the believer's life. Every life is far more influential in its infusions than in its ordered marches, but it is pre-eminently true of the life that is hidden with Christ in God. Men may be hostile to our logic who are yet hospitable to our spirit. We can reach them with an inspiration when our arguments fail. Our river triumphs when our formal approaches are rejected. We can infuse when we cannot convince.

And all this opens out wonderful channels of ministry. We can infuse one another with courage even when we utter no heroic words. Our own brave spirit is in circulation, and its strong, steady current is flowing into the common life. And we can infuse one another with quietness. Who has not experienced the quieting influence of a quiet presence? Who has not felt the pressure as of a strong, steady hand when some quiet woman has been about in the hour of sorrow

or death? Yes, our own quietness can be transmitted by this ministry of infusion. "Then had thy peace been as like a river!"

Our rivers will be all right if we are right at the springs. If the Lord is our Shepherd our cup will run over. And therefore it is our highest wisdom to cherish our highest relation and to put our trust in the Lord. "All our springs are in Thee"; and if we abide in the Lord our rivers will always be flowing. Yea, even in time of trouble, when the mountains are being shaken in the heart of the sea, there shall be "a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God."

XLVIII

BREAKING THE AWFUL SILENCE

"Jesus saith unto her . . ."

JOHN xi. 23.

WHO likes to break the silence when some sorrow has stricken our neighbor dumb? The stroke has fallen, and that which was so beautiful lies in apparent ruin. There is a strange silence. All the bird-song is hushed, as when a gun has just been fired in a grove. And who likes, I say, to break the silence? We often just take the hand of the one who is smitten dumb, and we clasp it in a masonry of sympathy which has no other speech.

And sometimes those who do speak only intensify the pain of the silence, and make it harder to bear. Their words have no significance. Their wallets have no cordials. Their lamps have no light. Their ministry has no grace. What has the materialist to say, that is worth saying, when the heart is

aching in the unfamiliar pangs of bereavement? What word of comfort has the secularist when there seems to be nothing in all the wide world but a newly-made grave? What song has the agnostic which can fill the silence with a quickening hope? All these attempted ministries may disturb the sorrowful, but they leave the desolate soul in a silence which is all the more desolate because of their futile effort to break it.

How many such fearful silences there are to-day! In how many millions of lives the sunshine has fled, and all the birds are hushed, and it seems as though the final night has fallen, and as if there will be spring no more! "Speak Thou, availing Christ, and fill this pause!" And the Lord Jesus Christ will speak in the awful pause. And his word is not as a mocking echo in the halls of death. It fills the vacancy with life and light. "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life." The grace of His speech is as ample as our need, and His comforts are as deep as our pain.

His word besets us behind, and before, and it lays its hand upon us. It covers the entire field over which our soul is wandering in

pathetic vagrancy. It throws its hallowing grace over our yesterdays. It enfolds us in our present journey. And it lights up tomorrow with eternal hope. When the Lord Jesus breaks the silence, He breaks what makes the silence deadly; He breaks the bondage of the soul, and spiritual assurance is born, and the winter is past, and the time of the singing of birds is come. He is waiting to speak to us if only we will listen. "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth!"

XLIX

PREPARING FOR THE MIRACLE

“And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me.”

JOHN xi. 41.

THAT is a very strange and unusual order. Lazarus is still in the grave, and the thanksgiving precedes the miracle of resurrection. I thought that the thanksgiving would have arisen when the great deed had been wrought, and Lazarus was restored to life again. But Jesus gives thanks for what He is about to receive. The gratitude breaks forth before the bounty has arrived, in the assurance that it is most certainly on the way. The song of victory is sung before the battle has been fought. It is the sower who is singing the song of the harvest-home. It is thanksgiving before the miracle!

Now if we ever observed this order in our spiritual life we seem to have largely lost it. Sometimes, but I am afraid only very rarely,

we gather for praise when the battle is over and we are surrounded by the visible spoils. We hold our thanksgiving service at the close of the campaign. We have counted our converts and we are ready to sing. But who thinks of sounding the silver trumpet before the mission begins, and of gathering a congregation for praise before a single convert is penitently knocking at the door? Who thinks of announcing a victory-psalm when the crusaders are just starting out for the field? Where can we hear the grateful song for the answer which has not yet been received?

And after all, there is nothing strange, or forced, or unreasonable in the Master's order. Praise is really the most vital preparatory ministry to the working of the miracle. Miracles of all kinds are wrought by spiritual power. Spiritual power is always proportioned to our faith. And what is there which is so productive and expressive of faith as a pæan of thanksgiving before the deed has been wrought? There is nothing like thanksgiving for opening out all the highways and byways of the soul. Thanksgiving converts all the avenues of the

soul into channels of divine grace and power. Even prayer cannot make the soul receptive without praise. Whenever there is prayer without praise we "limit the Holy One of Israel," and the consecrating power is restrained. The water of life is waiting, but the channels are choked.

What energy would possess our doings and our goings if we marched to our tasks in the triumphant spirit of assuring praise! The Lord Jesus addressed the dead Lazarus with lips that were glowing with praise. He passed from praise to deed. The lips that spake the great words, "Lazarus, come forth!" were laden with the song of assurance. If only we ministers gave our message after such a preparatory ministry, how we should wake the dead! And if all the servants of God went forth to attack hoary wrongs singing the praiseful song of victory the strongholds of iniquity would fall. Thanksgiving before the miracle, that is the order of Jesus.

L

THE INNER DOOR

"Sir, we would see Jesus."

JOHN xii. 21.

IN **his** book entitled "Fragments of Prose and Poetry," Mr. F. W. H. Myers has the following vital passage: "I had never as yet realised faith in its emotional fullness; I had been converted by the Phædo and not by the Gospel. Christian conversion now came to me in a potent form, through the agency of Josephine Butler, whose name will not be forgotten in the annals of English philanthropy. She introduced me to Christianity, so to say, by *an inner door*." Blessed are pilgrims who come upon guides who are familiar with the inner door, and who know the direct way to the central heart of fire! They are not impeded or imprisoned by the outer courts of forms. They do not lose themselves in the labyrinthine windings of complicated dogma. They discover the sim-

plicity that is in Christ Jesus, and the door opens into infinite love and grace.

Never was there more urgent need of ministers of the inner door, men and women of spiritual directness who lead the soul immediately to Christ. Henry Drummond was a great apostle of the inner door. Those Edinburgh students were not conducted to some outer vestibule and made to believe they were now in the palace of the King. They were taken straight to the inner door by an intimate friend of the King, and were brought into the immediate presence of the Lord. They were not left in the anteroom of any —ology, they were introduced to a friend, the great Saviour and companion of the soul. Drummond knew the way home!

It was not an official minister who found the inner door for Myers. It was a saintly woman who knew the ways of the Lord, and who especially knew the way of His salvation. And this is the sacred priesthood to which every believer is called, and which every believer can exercise. That man is a priest unto the Lord who finds the inner door for other men. All who know the Lord may be priests of this order. The only ordina-

tion we need is to have found Him ourselves. The little child of the house may know his way home even though he might be sorely puzzled by a map of the estate. We need not be experts in the theological map to be apostles of the inner door. "Sir, we would see Jesus!" To be able to introduce them is to be a minister of the life indeed.

LI

THE REVELATION IN THE AFTER DAYS

“What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.”

JOHN xiii. 7.

THERE are numberless things to which at present we have no clue. Many of the Master's words have no immediate significance for us. Many of the things which He does to us hide their secrets. But the veil is only for a while. In after days the dark word will unfold a wealth of strength and grace, and the confusing experience which perplexed us like a fog will find a minister of interpretation in some later experience and it will become transparent. And so revelation waits upon life. We cannot force its secrets by the strenuous grappling work of the intellect. We do not reach the most precious light of God by the venturous journeys of the reason, but by faithful commonplace pilgrimage of daily life. That is

to say, later events hold the keys to present mysteries. When the later event arrives, it opens the lock of some perplexity, as though the puzzling thing had been touched by a magician's wand. It is not a bit of good struggling for a premature unfolding of the divine mystery. The revelation awaits our arrival at a certain place on the road, and when Time brings us to that place, and we enter into its experiences, we shall find to our delightful surprise that the old, dark-some thing has become luminous. And so the only thing we need to be concerned about is to be on the King's highroad, stepping out in accordance with His most holy will. "Light is sown for the righteous." At the right moment the shining harvest will appear.

This is the principle we follow in the training of our children. They have to receive many things whose inner secrets are hid. Many of their lessons are little else than words, and their treasures may not be realised for many years. Our children can bear the elementary lesson, but they could not receive the more profound explanation. And so they have to await the unfolding.

The teacher could not unlock the words for his pupils; they can only be unlocked by the maturing years. There is a passage in "Sentimental Tommy" which says all this much better than I am saying it. It is a reference to the Shorter Catechism. "One of the noblest books which Scottish children learn by heart, not understanding it at the time, but its meaning comes long afterwards, and suddenly, when you have most need for it." That is life's process of revelation. Words may have been without significance for years, and then there comes a happening which makes the dark words blaze like lamps along the road.

And so, in all our thinking about the perplexing things of life, it is well to remember that many of the solutions will only come with the interpreting years. Do not let us worry when some lock is obstinate. We cannot force the door and enter into the home of light. The key has not yet arrived! Or, to put it in a better way, we have not yet arrived at the key. If we are faithful to our Lord we shall find that all these things have been provided in pairs, and that if God has sent a mystery He will most assuredly

some day provide the explanation. But if the explanation were given prematurely it would only add to our burden. The light will be given when its shining will be a joy.

LII

THE TROUBLED HEART

“Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

JOHN xiv. 27.

WHENEVER Ian Maclaren was called to a house of sickness or sorrow he always read to the troubled folk the fourteenth chapter of John. Nothing was ever used as a substitute for this. “If one is sinking into unconsciousness,” he said, “and you read ‘In my Father’s house are many mansions,’ he will come back and whisper ‘mansions,’ and he will wait till you finish ‘where I am there ye shall be also,’ before he dies in peace.” In such critical hours there is something so vital, so satisfying, so pacifying in our Saviour’s assurances of God and His wonderful preparations of redemption.

But it is not only in the last crisis of the great translation that we need the fourteenth chapter of John. There are sore convulsions

in life when death is far away, and we sometimes wish it were near. Death might solve our troubles; life itself is the problem. We have suffered some heavy shock. Our circumstances are all upheaved. Familiar landmarks have been removed. We have lost our bearings.

And these are just the needs which our Lord associated with the word of grace. Our minds are distracted. We do not know how to direct our thought. We are pulled and driven many ways, and no way seems more imperative than another. Our inner life is like a discordant orchestra, like an orchestra without a leader, "all at sixes and sevens!" We are distracted. And we are also the children of fear. Uncertainty seems to have hold of things, and we look down every road with cold apprehension. And it is just this two-fold condition of the hot head and the chilled heart that our Saviour has in mind, and to which He would bring His wonderful ministry of restored assurance. "Let not your mind be distracted, neither let your heart be afraid!"

What is to be our resource in these troubled hours? Our Lord calls us to hold

to one Centre, and to one only. If we get away from that Centre everything else will be erratic and eccentric. If we abide there everything will take its appropriate place. "Believe in God, believe also in Me!" We are to trust the Father as unveiled to us in Jesus Christ His Son. We are to fling ourselves, with all our weight of care and sorrow, upon His loyal and loving strength. We are to hold there—nay, to rest there, and the troubled incidents will begin to arrange themselves in divinely purposed ranks. If Christ be lifted up He will draw even these convulsive happenings into destined and friendly order. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

LIII

THE GIFT OF PEACE

“My peace I give unto you.”

JOHN xiv. 27.

BUT a soul may possess the peace of Christ and yet know no end of trouble. Indeed, round about these words of our Lord there are other words which look like unfriendly presences frowning in apparent contradiction. “The world hateth you”; “They shall put you out of the synagogue”; “Ye shall weep and lament”! These are very strange ingredients in a life which is supposed to be possessed by peace. The peace of Jesus is evidently not synonymous with the quietness of settled circumstance. It is not the peace of plenty. It is something which is independent of these. It can co-exist with turbulence. It can go hand in hand with want. The circumference of life may be the realm of storm, while its centre is the home of a profound serenity. The peace of Jesus

is the harmony of a central and spiritual relation. It is union and communion with God. The soul is at rest. Its vagrancy is over. It no longer seeks a new doorstep every night; it has found a settled home.

If peace were only a matter of quieted circumstances we might win it for ourselves. We could seek and find it in social reconstructions, in juster laws, in more enlightened economy, in ampler comforts, in a larger purse. But if vital peace is supremely a matter of spiritual relations, how is it to be found? And, especially, if it is the restoration of a broken relation, who can reset the disjointed limb and put it right again? This peace is not the work of the will. It is not an acquisition of human ingenuity. It is a gift, and it is the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. "My peace I give unto you." He came to bring the wanderer home. He came to change our shifting, rickety tent for a settled abode. He came to end the appalling divorce which is the work of sin. He came to put us right with God, and to transform a sinful and restless vagrancy into a holy peace.

And if we receive the Saviour's gift of

peace our life will have two distinctions—and these are only two of the many royalties which belong to the reconciled soul. First of all, we shall see things tranquilly. We shall have an eye “made quiet by the power of harmony.” We shall therefore see things as they are; they will not be out of proportion; nor shall we be deceived by any borrowed plumes. “The eyes of them that see shall not be dim.” And, for a second thing, if we have the peace of Jesus, we shall do things tranquilly. This central peace will affect our activities on the circumference. There will be no fuss, no feverishness, no panic. No energy will lead away in fretfulness and wasteful care. We shall have the strength of stillness. For God’s peace, that surpasses all our dreams, shall keep guard over our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

LIV

SETTLING DOWN IN CHRIST

“Abide in Me.”

JOHN XV. 4.

THE Lord Jesus Christ calls us to a settled life in His fellowship. But the difficulty is, our nature is so truant. The majority of us cannot settle down anywhere in anything. We are possessed of a spirit of restlessness, and we are the willing victims of constant change. We rush from one thing to another, and we do not tarry long enough at anything to make it disburse its treasure. It is a case of touch and go, not of quiet entry and deep possession. And so it is in our supreme relationship to Christ. We are vagrants, knocking occasionally at His door. We are rovers, paying Him infrequent visits. We do not settle down and abide in Him.

It is a very practical and familiar word which the Master uses. It is used many times in the New Testament in its ordinary everyday relationship; “Zaccheus, come

down, for to-day I must abide at thy house!" *Abide* with us, for the day is far spent." Our Lord invites us to live in Him, and to make Him our eternal home. Many of us go so far as to make Him our Church, where we occasionally worship Him. Or we make Him our hospital in those seasons when calamity is upon us, and our life is all in pieces. Or we regard Him as a kind of spiritual health-resort where we go now and again to take the medicinal waters. But we do not make Him our home. We visit Him, we do not live with Him. We look in, but we do not abide.

And this it is, this want of a settled life, which makes our influence so capricious and our service so broken and constant. Our religious life is a series of incalculable spasms. It is like the eruptions of an irregular geyser, and not the ceaseless flowings of a noble river. And yet it is the river which provides the Scriptural symbol of a deep and healthy life. "Then had thy peace been like a river," abounding in great energy, splendid in its impressiveness, and wonderful in its continuity.

Perhaps it may be truly said, even of our

Church life, that it is too often a series of distractions which tend to make us erratic in spirit; and we wander about from cistern to cistern, just sipping of what is supposed to be the water of life, but having no abiding communion with the Spring. We need to settle down to deep and ever-deepening fellowship with our Lord. We must make our home in Him. All our flirtations with other loves must cease if we would know the joy and peace and power of the Lord. In Christ is our salvation.

It was said by one of the friends of James Hinton that under the influence of the strong religious devotion which made it his habit for thirty years regularly to retire three times a day for prayer and communion with God, his character gradually mellowed and softened into a marvellous realisation of the Lord's presence. It was a touching word of Hinton's, "We are near home; may we be home-like!" So many of us, "in our religious life, have the conventional air of visitors, not the natural homelikeness of the children of the house. We don't look as if we lived there. There is a certain awkwardness, an uneasy restraint, a suggestion that

we do not know the ways and speech of the house. We have not 'the glorious liberty of the children of God.' We are not as the sheep which, under the perfect defence of the shepherd, *go in and out* and find pasture." And yet this gracious intimacy, this ample freedom, are our abounding privilege in grace. We are not to remain on the frontiers of bondage—part friends and part bondslaves, half free and half bound, living in a sort of twilight of the kingdom. We are called right into the house of light, into the Lord's immediate presence, to be guests, nay, members of the family, at His bountiful table, and to enjoy unfettered intercourse with our Head. We are invited to abide in Him.

LV

THE JOY OF THE LORD

"That My joy might be in you, and that your joy might be full."

JOHN xv. 11.

It is an extraordinary thing that our Lord should speak of His joy in the dark season through which He was passing. The circumstances were most oppressive. Antagonisms were blazing with fiercest enmity. Hatreds had deepened into black passions of the midnight. Malicious nets were being woven around Him. Calvary was only a stone's throw away, and on the morrow the grim cross would be on the hill! It was a very wilderness of stern surroundings. And yet the Master quietly spoke about His joy, an inward joy which these outer things could not disturb. His joy was like a well in the inner keep of a castle when all the streams of the countryside are locked in the bondage

of frost. It was like the light and the fire in a cottage, quietly shining and burning while the tempest rages outside. It was a joy that was victorious over the unfriendly world.

And this inner joy has always been one of the distinctions of the triumphant saints. They have been self-possessed in the tumult. They have been radiant in the night. They have been hopefully quiet even when terrible things have shown their faces at the door. They have revealed a cheery mastery of rough and brutal circumstances. The privileged readers of "Men of the Knotted Heart" will remember that Grant was once at Ayr Station, and there was a little lad running up and down the platform, skipping and singing. A man was sweeping out the waiting-rooms, doing the most menial work about the place, and wanting an arm, and most ill-thriven looking. Grant said to him, "How much would it take to set you dancing and singing like that boy?" "Not much, sir," he said, "for I'm singing inside me a' the time." And taking off his cap he lifted his face to the sky above, "Ay, sir," he said, "just that! In God's house for evermore my dwelling place shall be!" That is the

victory of the saint—the inner joy which rises above the painful and crippling antagonisms of the world.

And what is this joy? It is much more than high spirits. High spirits often fail in the crisis. And it is much more than a happy temperament. Happy temperaments can be blown out like candles in a gusty night. This joy arises from the deep secrets of spiritual satisfaction. It is the sense of health and wholesomeness when the soul lives and breathes in its native air. It is fellowship with the eternal springs. It is the assurance of all-rightness in our relations with the eternal God. One gropes for all sorts of analogies to express the wealthy fact. It is the joy of the wedded **union** between the soul and the Lord. It is the interpassage of covenanted love. It is the interchange of sacred confidences. The soul has come to herself, and she has found herself in God, and all her springs are in Him! “Have you water all the year round?” I said to a friend who had built a house in a somewhat droughty place. “Yes,” he answered, “our wells are very deep!” And “there is a river

the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God!" "Therefore will not we fear, though the mountains be shaken in the hearts of the seas!"

LVI

THE JOY OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

"These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."
JOHN xv. 11.

WHO would not say that this joy is sorely lacking in our modern religious life? We may have a certain triumph of will. We may loyally hold to the sterner virtues. We may be cultivating a keener social conscience. But I think we lack the apostolic exhilarancy, their power of nimble rebound, their song, their praise, their joy. Our religious life is in many ways a good, solid, roomy structure, but somehow or other we often forget the lights. The solidity is there, but it is not radiant. The strength is there, but it is not winsome. We may be loyal to our God, but we are not delighted in Him. The virtues may be there, but they are not lit up. Truth is there, but it is not lit up. Patience is there, but it is not lit up. I must repeat

my figure, we have erected our building, but we have forgotten the lights. Or shall I say we have too often built a solid crypt, and we have not carried it forward to the belfry, and when we have no joyful hallelujahs we lack the merry bells which might lead many a wanderer home.

Let us glance at one or two characteristics of the joy which is our appointed inheritance in the Lord. And, first of all, it is a joy of very startling independencies. It is perfectly amazing what this joy can do without and yet keep on burning. It can do without material treasure. It can do without friendly circumstances. We find it shining in the association of persecution and pain. The New Testament writers appear to love to startle us with the shock of a great surprise. We turn to its pages, and we are reading some black record of hostility to the Christian faith, a record of almost inconceivable suffering, and just when our spirit is sinking before the almost certain despondency and despair of the followers of Christ, we are aroused by the shining wonder of a strong joy. "The Disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." "And they

departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ." This is the joy of the Lord which is strength.

What is its secret? Here is the secret: "Abide in Me, and My joy shall abide in you." It is the joy of a deeply intimate communion with Christ. The deeper intimacy gives a larger freedom, and it is the larger freedom that gives birth to joy and song. And how do we get this deeper communion? How do we pass into the inner rooms of the love of our Lord? We do it just by giving Him entry into the inner rooms in our own souls. We get no deeper into Christ than we allow Him to get into us. Indeed, what we really mean by getting into Christ is permitting Him to get into us. It is not our first concern to find room in Christ; it is really our concern to let Him have more room in us. Our intimacy with Christ is just in proportion to the surrender of ourselves to Him. If I would deepen my intimacy with Christ, the way to do it is to open another room. That is the primary secret; we open the doors and the Lord enters in. And the second secret of spiritual

joy is this: the joy wells up within us in ever-deepening copiousness as we co-operate with our Lord in the service of His Kingdom. "Rejoice with Me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." But would all the neighbours be able to rejoice with Him in equal measure? Suppose one neighbour had been out with Him on the wilds, and shared in the perils and mishaps of the search, would he not be the one who would enter most deeply into the joy of the finding? That is the principle; they who have shared in the toils of the quest will share in the joys of the conquest. "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

LVII

THE SENSE OF MISSION

"As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."

JOHN xvii. 18.

THIS word of the Master was recalled to me when I was reading Mr. Moulton's very tender and inspiring life of his brother. It was a life controlled by divine constraints. Even the lighter movements were in the leash of divine possession. The playfield was consecrated as well as the battlefield. Indeed, there is one phrase in the biography which seems to me to give the secret of his life. "One of the last sermons he preached in India was from the word 'must,' and it was characteristic of him that he should have taken such a theme, for to him, the entire visit to India was not a tour, but a mission." That is a most significant phrase, "not a tour, but a mission." It links the life of

Dr. Moulton with the life of the Nazarene. His movements were parallel with the purpose of the world. His boat moved in the mighty trade-wind of the divine purpose, and he was ever being borne forward to God's desired haven.

What was the power and ministry of this sense of mission in the life of the Master? For one thing He was always about His Father's business. He never came to any secular patch of ground on which he could build no altar. There was nothing profane; that is to say, there was nothing outside His conception of sanctity and sanctification. Everything was in the temple of worship, whether it was the making of a yoke for some neighbouring farmer in Nazareth or the telling of the good news in the high courts of Jerusalem. And so it is with the friends of Christ, who are held by the same sense of dedication and commission. They see the Master's banner on every site, every place is hallowed ground, every circumstance is under the ownership of one Lord, and they look upon it as part of the heavenly fields.

But there is more than this. Christ Jesus

approached every circumstance with the strange and wonderful purpose to make it pay tribute to His Father. The road of consecration led right up to it, and therefore it must be dedicated to the divine glory. It must be compelled to disperse its treasure to the honour of His Father's name. There is something very awe-inspiring when our Lord had His first gloomy glimpse of the Cross. There is a natural shrinking of the spirit. But it is only for a moment. He calls His tremendous mission to His consciousness. "For this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name." In that surrender, and in that prayer, He made the gloomy and masterful circumstance His subject. And so it is in all lives that share His sense of sacred mission. They meet things as though by appointment. They do not run up against them by chance, as though life was a lottery, and as though circumstances tumbled together by caprice. Everything along the road is handled in the spirit of commission by the commissioner of the Lord. He handles leaden caskets as he handles golden caskets, and in the leaden casket

he finds the precious scroll. He faces leaden skies with the same confidence as sunny skies. He walks the muddy, rutty road with the assurance with which he treads the grassy paths. He faces precipitous hills with the same serenity that he walks the sweet and fragrant vales. The rugged task is his as well as the enticing privilege. The prickly chestnut burr is for him as well as the soft and toothsome fruit. He meets every experience in the sense of a divine mission, and he masters it, by compelling it to be the servant of character and the liegeman of his Lord. And so "all things work together for good." "All things are yours."

Emerson says somewhere that the light is always given on the necessary journey. Yes, life which is constrained by a sense of mission is life which is light in the Lord. "Light is shown for the righteous." It springs up like lamps upon the necessary road. Our "must" has its correlative in providence. When He sends us on a mission "He goeth before." "I go to prepare a place for you." The lamps are even now being lit. The hostels are appointed and furnished. Every-

thing is ready. And therefore Christ is nearer to us than our circumstances, for our circumstances become the high roads through which He approaches our soul.

LVIII

LIVING AT SECOND HAND

"Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?"

JOHN xviii. 34.

WAS it a rumour caught in the air, or a product of personal experience? Did it arise in gossip, or was it born of deep and private wonder? Was it from without or from within? Was it borrowed or wrought? That is a very vital issue; we can live our life on borrowed goods or on personal findings. There may be nothing original in our possession, nothing which is the prize of our own secret quest, nothing which is the fruit of our own lonely travail. We can be satisfied with mere existence, contented to be parasites, idly sucking other people's blood.

But a very grim fatality attends the life which is lived at second hand. Even when it takes the lowest form of living on other people's money, borrowing the material means

of existence, the issues are most deadly. Everything in manhood begins to soften; the moral muscles and the spiritual nerves speedily lose their robustness. The precious sense of shame drops its vital heat, and the soul becomes shameless. The man who turned crimson when he made his first borrowing becomes the coolest cadger, and he borrows more complacently than he worked. A man becomes a sponge.

But we can borrow other things besides money. We can borrow our convictions. But when our convictions are borrowed they are really not convictions at all. They are only light opinions. They are just outer garments, which we can change at our pleasure; they are not inner habits, woven into the very texture of our souls. A conviction is born of "thyself." It is conceived in the travail and toil of the spirit. A spiritual conviction has secret relations with the Infinite. It is "rooted in Christ Jesus." It is therefore endowed with mighty powers of endurance. It does not sicken "when heat cometh," but abides fresh and vigorous through the fiercest drought.

And, therefore, it is a part of life's vital

wisdom to take borrowed facts and transform them into truth in the secret processes of personal experience. Every inherited tradition must suggest a personal exploration, and we must make the reverent friendship of Truth as a personal discovery. "Son of man, eat this book!" That is the way in which we must deal with all our creeds, and with the deposits of other men's testimony and experience. To merely accept the book is to borrow a belief; to eat it is to become possessed of a favour. The one is formal existence; the other is spiritual life. "This is life, to know Thee!"

LIX

THE GREAT ACT OF RECEIVING

“Receive ye.”

JOHN XX. 22.

It is a great thing to ask. It is a still greater thing to receive. There are many askers to one receiver. We make our request, but we do not take the answer. We call for the waters, but we do not fill our pitchers. We present the promissory form, but we do not wait for the money. And so we have frequently a maimed conception of prayer. We have regarded it only as a petition, while an equally vital content is reception. And therefore it happens that a great many supplants are spiritual paupers because they are listless or careless about receiving the very things for which they prayed. It might be truly said concerning them, “Ye have not because ye will not take the things ye ask.”

And think how many supremely wonderful things are waiting to be received! And

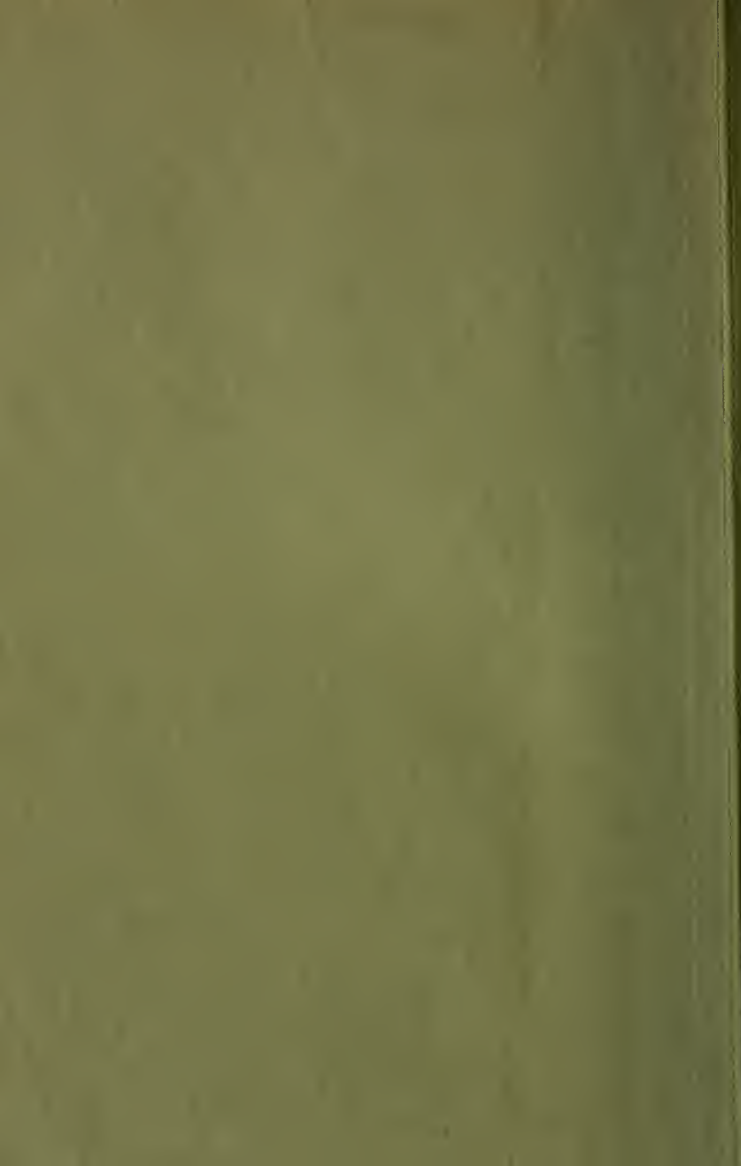
it is not as though the rich provisions are waiting on the fields of California while the hungry folk are fainting in New York. The provision is alongside the hunger, the wealth is close to the want. We have no journey to take. We have no indifference to arouse. We have no anger to appease. The heavenly stores are within our gates, just waiting to be received. And think, I say, what some of them are. Recall their evangel. "Receive remission of sins!" "Ye shall receive power!" "Receive ye the Holy Spirit!" All these treasures of grace are not deposited in the inner room of the soul whether we will or no. We have to take them in. We must receive them, and the reception is a deliberate act of the soul.

How do we receive them? "Believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them." So that believing is the act of reception. But belief is more than a mental assumption. A mental assumption may rest in the mind as idly and as impotently as marbles in a boy's pocket. Mental assumptions may be like stones, or they may be like seeds. They are like stones when they stand alone; they become seeds when they are wedded to the

will and become the faith of positive and practical life. The act of belief is the will acting on the divine answer to our prayers, and working that answer into everything we think and say and do.

When I have prayed for forgiveness I am to receive it, and I receive it when I face the road again as a forgiven man, and shape all my intercourse as one who has been forgiven, and I shall surely experience the reality of it in spiritual joy and peace. And so it is with all the waiting gifts of grace. Let us believe we have them, let us act as though the treasure is already in our wallets, and let us start out upon our journey giving freely, on the kindling assumption that we have freely received.

THE END



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